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WAYS WITH ASPARAGUS

PEOPLE who are lucky enough to have a vegetable garden are now reaping a rich reward for their labour. Perhaps I should say a second rich reward, for the garden lover has already enjoyed the work, and his health has profited by it, so that his appetite is assured. Asparagus and green peas are the first favourites, with new potatoes. They are so delightful that very little meat is needed at the meal, and a small grilled chop or piece of tender steak is usually sufficient.

To Prepare

Wash it well and carefully, so as not to break the tender tips. Tie in small bundles, and stand these upright in a saucepan with just enough boiling salted water to cover the thick part of the stalks. Cover with lid and boil 10 to 20 minutes—the tips will cook in the steam, if young. Alternatively, after the thick stalks are tender, arrange the bundles in water so that the tips are covered and cook 5 minutes longer. In both methods, the tender tops are cooked but unbroken. An Easy Way is to spread stalks in 2 layers in a wide enough pan. Sprinkle with $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons salt, pour on boiling water to a depth of one inch, cover, and boil until lower ends, tested with fork, are just tender-crisp (about 12 to 15 minutes). Lift out with perforated egg-slice.

To Serve

Asparagus should be served as a first course, separately. Put 3 or 4 cooked stalks on a neat slice of hot toast (to absorb the moisture) and pour a little melted butter over or sprinkle asparagus with a little salt and pepper. Melt $\frac{1}{4}$ cup butter, margarine, or vegetable shortening beaten with butter flavouring. If desired, it may be browned slightly when melting. Pour it over asparagus either plain, or with one of the following added: a few drops lemon juice, minced parsley or chives, a few capers, a sprinkle of nutmeg, a little minced onion or garlic, a little prepared mustard, a little grated cheese, or a few crisp bacon bits.

Asparagus Continental

Use thin green asparagus and cut tender parts into pieces a little larger than peas. Cook about 5 minutes in boiling salted water, then drain. Put a small piece of butter in a saucepan, and when hot stir in a little castor sugar and about 2 tablespoons water; add the par-boiled asparagus, cover saucepan, and simmer very slowly $\frac{1}{2}$ hour. Remove asparagus and thicken sauce with a little flour; then, just before serving, stir in a beaten egg yolk. Pour this sauce over asparagus and serve at once. Alternatively, after the little pieces of asparagus have been parboiled, heat a piece of butter in a saucepan, add some finely chopped parsley and young lettuce leaves, 2 or 3 small whole onions, a pinch of salt, pepper, nutmeg and flour and a little water. Cook a few minutes, stirring. Then put in asparagus and simmer very gently, $\frac{1}{2}$ hour.

Hollandaise Asparagus

Arrange hot cooked asparagus stalks on buttered toast. Top with poached eggs. Garnish with bacon and serve with

Hollandaise sauce made in a double boiler, with the water in lower saucepan very hot but not boiling. Beat 2 egg yolks till thick and lemon coloured, add $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt and dash cayenne pepper, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup melted butter, about a teaspoon at a time, beating constantly. Then combine another $\frac{1}{4}$ cup melted butter with a tablespoon of lemon juice and slowly add it, about 2 teaspoons at a time, beating after each addition. If you wish to make this ahead of time, just chill it, and when ready to serve, stir it until soft over luke-warm, not hot, water.

Creamed Asparagus

Heat thin cream or top milk or tinned evaporated milk. Season with salt, pepper, butter, and minced parsley. Pour

BUTTER HINT

Into a little saucepan standing in a big one containing cold water, put 1 teaspoon gelatine, 1 teaspoon cornflour, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt (important), 1 breakfast cup fresh milk, 1 beaten egg. Put on the gas under outer saucepan, and bring to the boil, stirring contents of small saucepan all the while. By the time the water in outer saucepan boils, the mixture should be thickened up like custard, but it must not actually boil. Put it aside to cool. In another basin break up with a fork $\frac{1}{2}$ lb butter. Beat in the cooled mixture till nicely blended. This may take 15-20 minutes. Pat up into a pound of butter and leave to set. Spreads well and tastes good.

over hot cooked asparagus. Or make a thin white sauce, using some of the asparagus water instead of all milk, and adding a chopped hard boiled egg.

Asparagus Souffle

Two tablespoons melted butter, 3 tablespoons flour, 1 cup milk, 4 eggs, $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups diced cooked asparagus, $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt. Make sauce by blending in small saucepan, butter and flour, add milk gradually and cook slowly until thickened, stirring constantly. Beat egg yolks until thick and lemon coloured and add the sauce, stirring constantly. Add asparagus and salt. Beat egg whites until stiff and fold into asparagus mixture. Pour into greased casserole set in pan of hot water and bake in slow oven 325 degrees (or regulo 3) about 45 minutes.

Ham and Asparagus Rolls

Use fresh cooked asparagus. Grill thin slices of uncooked ham on both sides. On each slice of ham place several stalks of asparagus. Then roll up the ham slices. On each roll of ham and asparagus serve a generous amount of this thin rich cheese sauce. In the top of a double boiler melt $\frac{1}{4}$ packet processed cheese (i.e. 1/8 lb.) Gradually add $\frac{1}{3}$ rd cup of milk, stirring all the time till smooth.

Asparagus Cigarettes

Roll up thin 3 inch tips of cooked, drained asparagus in thin triangular slices of fresh white bread first dusted with grated cheese. Brush with melted butter and grill or toast until brown.

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