



Asparagus and Citrus Salad

by Heather D'Eliso Gordon

In the coming weeks, stacks of green asparagus will appear beside piles of citrus fruit at your local market. From late February to early June, asparagus spears rapidly rise from underneath the fern leaves of asparagus plants, and are cut down only hours later. Asparagus is a tender delicacy and is best when consumed as soon as possible after harvesting. Look for it at the farmers market.

Cooked asparagus is a great addition to many recipes, including this salad, adapted from the California Asparagus Commission website. The vegetable's unique flavor and short season demand that it be enjoyed by itself at least once this season.

Here are some tips on how to enjoy fresh, local asparagus:

- Asparagus is best prepared whole to preserve its nutrition and flavor. However, larger spears may taste grassy or bitter if not harvested soon enough and therefore benefit from being peeled.
- The cut-ends need to be trimmed to remove the tough, fibrous portions. Do this by cutting the stalks with a knife or by snapping them with two hands — the spear will break where it begins to be tender.

This recipe calls for steamed asparagus (directions below), but it can alternatively be boiled or roasted:

- To boil: Place the spears in a large pot of boiling salted water for about 3 to 4 minutes, until tender.
- To roast: Toss the spears with olive oil and salt, spread on a baking tray, and roast in the oven at 400 degrees for about 10 minutes. Check and rotate the spears halfway through.

Servings: 4 | **Prep Time: 10 minutes** | **Cooking Time: 5 minutes**

Ingredients

Vinaigrette:

2 tablespoons Balsamic vinegar (or 1 tablespoon sherry vinegar plus 1 tablespoon Balsamic)
1 shallot, finely diced
Zest and juice from 1 orange
2 to 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
Salt and pepper, to taste

Salad:

1 1/2 pounds fresh asparagus
4 oranges, preferably blood oranges
Salt and pepper, to taste
4 tablespoons chopped walnuts or slivered almonds

Directions

To make the vinaigrette:

1. In a small bowl, combine shallots with the vinegar. Let stand at least 20 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, zest one of the oranges, avoiding the white pith. Finely chop zest and add to the vinegar.
3. Squeeze 1/3 cup of juice from zested orange and add to the bowl. Slowly whisk in the olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Set aside.

To prepare the salad:

1. Cut asparagus spears in half or in fourths. Steam for 4 to 5 minutes until crisp-tender and bright green, then remove from pot and drain to cool. Toss the cooled asparagus with the vinaigrette.
2. Cut the ends of the remaining oranges and peel them by cutting down the fruit vertically, following the contours of the fruit. Use your fingers to remove the peel.
3. Slice the peeled oranges horizontally into 1/2-inch-thick slices.
4. Arrange the orange slices and asparagus spears on salad plates and season to taste with additional salt and pepper.
5. Top each serving with 1 tablespoon chopped (optionally toasted) nuts.

Nutrition Information (per serving)

Calories: 171
Protein: 7 grams
Carbohydrates: 26 grams
Dietary fiber: 5 grams
Total fat: 6.5 grams
Saturated fat: 0.75 grams
Vitamin A: 189 RE
Vitamin C: 125 mg

