

Asparagus

Asparagus, a member of the lily family, has a delicate, fern-like appearance which sprouts in the spring with tender, succulent shoots of green, white, or purple edible stalks. Only a handful of Skagit farmers grow asparagus. Most asparagus grown in Washington state is in the Columbia Basin, the Yakima Valley, and the Walla Walla.

Nutrition

Asparagus is a powerhouse of nutrition, regarded as the second best source of folic acid, next to orange juice. Asparagus offers a balanced amount of Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Vitamin B6, riboflavin, and thiamine, as well as iron, potassium and fiber. Low in calories, only 45 calories per cup, with no fat or cholesterol, and is very low in sodium.

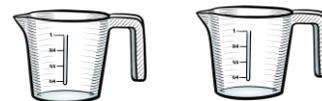
Selection

Look for compact, closed tips, and smooth round spears with a rich color. Choose stalks that are 6" to 8" long and snap off the bottom woody part. Snapping rather than cutting assures the top parts will be tender all the way down. To reduce waste, you can use the lower snapped green woody parts to make stock for soup. To clean before processing, snap off the woody part at the bottom of each stalk and rinse asparagus under running water

Storage

Asparagus prefers moist, cold storage. Refrigerate fresh asparagus for up to 5 days. Stand stalks in 1 inch of water like a flower bouquet and cover loosely with a plastic bag OR wrap cut ends in a damp paper towel and cover the towel with plastic. Thin asparagus typically has a slightly shorter storage time as the thinner stalks tend to dry out more quickly. For larger quantities, place spears on a sheet pan lined with a damp, clean kitchen towel and cover with a second damp, clean kitchen towel and refrigerate.

Measurements



Weight

Volume



Cajun Pickled Asparagus

Yield: 20 pints (or 10 quarts) asparagus spears

10 pounds asparagus
 ¼ cup pickling/canning salt
 2 ¾ quarts cider vinegar (5% acidity)
 2 ½ quarts water
 ¾ cup brown sugar

Per pint jar:
 ¼ tsp red pepper (more or less according to taste)
 1 tsp cumin seed (or ¼ tsp cumin)
 1 clove garlic

Wash asparagus well in cool water. Cut into jar-length spears. Combine salt, vinegar, water, and sugar to make brine. Heat to boiling.

Pack asparagus into pint or 1 ½ pint jars. Add red pepper (to taste), cumin and 1 clove garlic in each jar. Cover with boiling brine, leaving ½ inch headspace.

Remove air bubbles and adjust headspace if needed. Wipe rims of jars with a dampened clean paper towel; adjust two-piece metal canning lids and process in boiling water canner according to directions below.

Once processing is complete, turn off heat, remove canner lid and wait 5 minutes before removing jars. Let cool at room temperature, undisturbed, for 12 to 24 hours and check for seals. Wipe jars, remove rings, label, and store in a cool, dry place.

Processing Directions:

Style of pack	Jar Size	1–1,000 ft	1,001–6,000 ft
Hot	Pints	10 minutes	15 minutes

Preserve Skagit Crop Sheets describe three food preservation techniques—freezing, drying, and boiling water canning—consistent with USDA Food Preservation and Food Safety recommendations. Pressure canning for low acid foods such as meats and vegetables is not included.

Additional resources and recipes, as well as information on Pressure Canning, can be found on the WSU Skagit Food Preservation Website <https://extension.wsu.edu/skagit/fam/food-preservation/>

or the National Center for Home Food Preservation <https://nchfp.uga.edu/index.html>.

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