

# Vegetable Main Dish Recipes Vol. 13 Asparagus Delight in the Crisp Texture and Subtle Sweetness of Asparagus

Asparagus, with its bright green color, brights up the dining table. Asparagus is an easy-to-cook vegetable in a variety of dishes like salads, fried foods, and stir-fries.

By Makiko Hei

©iStock.com/Vima

## Asparagus helps relieve fatigue

The best-known nutrient in asparagus is aspartic acid, an amino acid that helps relieve fatigue and increase stamina. Aspartic acid is also a familiar ingredient in energy drinks in Japan, since it stimulates energy metabolism in the body.

Asparagus is also rich in rutin, a type of polyphenol. Rutin makes capillaries stronger and tougher and improves blood flow, so it helps prevent lifestyle diseases such as high blood pressure, arteriosclerosis, stroke, and heart disease. It also contains beta-carotene, which acts as an antioxidant and maintains healthy skin and mucous membranes, and vitamin C, which boosts immunity.

## How to choose asparagus

Choose asparagus with an overall dark green color, uniformly thick and straight stems, and firm, tightly closed tips. The cut end of the stem is also an important point to check. They should look fresh with no discoloration.

## How to store asparagus

### • When refrigerated

The secret to making asparagus last longer is to keep the cut ends moist. Cut off 2 mm to 3 mm at

the base, place a damp paper towel in the bottom of a storage jar or large glass, and stand the asparagus with the tips straight up. Cover the jar or glass with plastic wrap or a plastic bag and store it in the refrigerator. If you do not have a suitable container, you can wrap the asparagus in damp newspaper, then place it in a plastic bag and store it upright.

### • When freezing

When you want to use asparagus for stir-fries or other dishes, you can freeze it fresh. Cut off about 2 cm of the hard part at the base, peel the bottom one-third of each stalk with a peeler, arrange three to four stalks in a row and wrap them in cling film, place them in a storage bag, seal so it is airtight, and place in the freezer. Before cooking, cut the frozen stalks into the desired size.

For use in salads, prepare the asparagus as described above, boil it in salted water for about 1 minute, let it cool, pat dry with a paper towel, arrange three to four stalks in a row as described above. Then cover in plastic wrap, seal so it is airtight, and place in the freezer. When you're ready to use it, pour boiling water over the stalks to defrost them. Fresh or boiled asparagus can be frozen for about a month.

## Asparagus Pork Rolls with Black Vinegar Sauce

Here's a hearty, filling asparagus dish wrapped with pork. It's coated with a seasoned black vinegar sauce that goes well with rice.

**Cooking time: 20 minutes**

**[Ingredients]** 2~3 servings

9 green asparagus stalks  
9 thin slices pork shoulder (or pork belly)  
1 tablespoon potato starch  
A pinch of salt  
Pepper to taste  
1 tablespoon cooking oil  
Roasted white sesame seeds to garnish

**[Black vinegar sauce]** \*Combine all ingredients.

2 tablespoons black vinegar  
1 tablespoon sugar  
1 tablespoon cooking sake  
1 tablespoon soy sauce  
1 tablespoon water



### [Planning ahead]

To make the asparagus crunchy, cut off about 2 cm of the hard part at the base, peel the bottom 1/3 of the asparagus with a peeler, and soak in water for 1-2 hours.



### [How to cook]

1. Roll each piece of pork around the prepared asparagus in a spiral, dust with potato starch to completely coat the pieces.
2. Heat cooking oil in a frying pan over medium heat, place (1) on the pan, season with salt and pepper, and thoroughly brown the whole rolled asparagus while rolling them around in the pan for about 2 minutes. Place on paper towel to drain excess oil.
3. Add the black vinegar sauce all at once and cook and coat the asparagus roll with the sauce for 1-2 minutes. Serve on a plate and top with white sesame seeds.



### Tips

If you don't have a pan that is large enough to hold whole asparagus, just roll the pork around the asparagus stalks and cut them in half before cooking. The potato starch coating helps the different flavors mingle, and also thickens the sauce.



# Asparagus Frittata

This 'frittata,' an Italian-style omelet, is oven-baked to make it moist and tender.

**Cooking time: 30 minutes**

**[Ingredients]** 8 servings

\* You will need a 20cm skillet or other oven-safe pan

6 eggs	1/4 onions (50g)
6 tablespoons milk	A pinch or more of salt
60g shredded cheese	Pepper to taste
100g green asparagus	Olive oil as needed

**[Curry ketchup]** \* Combine curry and ketchup

3 tablespoons tomato ketchup

3/4 teaspoons curry powder



## [Planning ahead]

Please refer to the previous page.

## [How to cook]

**1.** Cut the prepared asparagus into thin diagonal slices about 5 mm thick × 4 cm long. Cut onion into thin slices 2 mm thick along the fibers. Preheat oven to 160°C. Crack the eggs into a bowl, add the milk, beat lightly, and add the cheese.

**2.** Heat olive oil in a frying pan and sauté onions, adding the asparagus when onions became tender; then season with salt and pepper and sauté briefly (about 30 seconds). Then add the sautéed onions and asparagus to the egg mixture in the bowl and mix.

**3.** Put the empty frying pan back on the heat, add the olive oil and warm it thoroughly over medium heat, then pour (2) into the pan all at once. Using a rubber spatula, stir the mixture in the pan, moving inward from the edges where the mixture has begun to harden, and heat until the mixture is just firm in places.

**4.** Bake in a preheated oven at 160°C for 20 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool, cut into desired serving sizes, and serve with curry ketchup.

\*The baked omelet is soft and fluffy when it is freshly baked, but shrinks as it cools.

\*Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for up to three days. It is also delicious as a filling for toasted sandwiches.



## Profile

### Makiko Hei

I love vegetables. I try to handle them with care and cook them simply but luxuriously, with the motto "Let's make our daily meals delicious regardless of the genre of the dishes."

HP: <https://vege3.jp/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/makichanshokudo/>

