

Phytochemicals come in almost as many forms as there are fruits and vegetables. Increased variety equals decreased risk. And if you don't like it the first time, give it a second chance or try a new way of cooking it. We've offered a few variations here on asparagus and Brussels sprouts.

Asparagus: Served Cold with Honey Mustard Vinaigrette

One of those special spring salads. A sweet-tart vinaigrette served over tender asparagus spears. You will need 2 pounds thin fresh asparagus spears.

Vinaigrette

1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil 1/4 tsp lemon or orange rind,
finely grated
1 Tbsp lemon or orange juice 1/4 tsp freshly ground pepper
1 tsp white wine vinegar 1/4 cup finely chopped toasted
almonds (optional)
1 Tbsp honey mustard

To make the vinaigrette, whisk all the ingredients together in a small bowl. The vinaigrette may be stored for up to one week in the refrigerator. Let the vinaigrette warm to room temperature before drizzling over cooked asparagus spears. Bend the asparagus stalks and break off the woody ends. Soak in cold water for a few minutes. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add 1 teaspoon salt to the boiling water. Have a large pan of ice ready. Toss the asparagus spears in the boiling salted water. Cook until just tender (3 to 7 minutes). Quickly remove the spears from the boiling water with tongs and drop in the ice water to stop the cooking process. Drain, then pat dry. Arrange asparagus spears on a large platter and drizzle with the vinaigrette. Sprinkle with toasted almonds.

Note: The cooked asparagus spears can be wrapped in paper towels, placed in a plastic bag, and stored for three days in the refrigerator.

Asparagus: Grilled or Roasted

2 pounds fresh asparagus, preferably thin
1 Tbsp olive oil
freshly grated parmesan cheese
salt and pepper

Snap the bottom ends off the asparagus and peel any thick spears with a potato peeler. Drizzle the olive oil over the asparagus and toss to coat. Sprinkle with a little salt to taste. Place the asparagus on the grill and cook until tender, turning after a minute or so. Remove the asparagus from the grill and sprinkle with grated parmesan and pepper to your taste.

Note: This recipe works well with indoor grills and grill pans. You may also roast the asparagus in the oven at 450 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes.

Asparagus Panini

The key to making good panini is to limit what you put in the middle to make sure nothing oozes out when you press the sandwich. You don't need a fancy panini press to make these. Use a skillet or griddle and press the sandwiches with a weighted pot.

Two slices of good, soft bread, such as a Pullman loaf or a ciabatta
Three to five spears of thin, fresh asparagus
Slice of tomato
Gruyere cheese, thinly sliced
Optional: Thinly sliced black forest ham
2 tsp olive oil, plus more for brushing bread
Salt and pepper

Brush one side of each slice of bread. Snap the ends off the asparagus and drizzle with 2 tsp olive oil. Toss until well coated. If you are not using ham, sprinkle lightly with salt. Cut spears in half.

Lay a slice of bread, oil side down, on the counter and top with a slice of gruyere cheese. Next, add the asparagus in a single layer, so that the cheese will glue the spears to the sandwich when it melts. Add ham, if desired, and tomato. Put the second slice of bread on top of the sandwich, oil side out.

Press sandwich in hot panini press until cheese is melted and sandwich is golden. If you are using a skillet and a weighted pot, heat the skillet over medium heat and place the panini, cheese side of the sandwich at the bottom, in the pan. Weight a pot and place it on top of the sandwich. Wait about two minutes and then remove the pot and flip the sandwich. Replace the weighted pot and cook until cheese is melted and the bread is golden.

Roasted Brussels Sprouts

1 ½ pounds Brussels sprouts
2 to 3 Tbsp olive oil
salt and pepper

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Trim the outer leaves of the sprouts, particularly those that are loose or yellowish-green, and cut them in half. Toss with olive oil. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Roast in the oven for 30 to 45 minutes, until sprouts are browned and tender.

Sautéed Brussels Sprouts

1 ½ pounds Brussels sprouts
2 cloves of garlic, chopped fine
2 Tbsp olive oil
salt and pepper

Trim the outer leaves of the sprouts, particularly those that are loose or yellowish-green, and cut them in half.

Put the olive oil and butter in a large skillet and heat over medium heat. Add the garlic and sautee until softened and lightly golden, but not browned. Remove the garlic from the pan and set aside.

Add the Brussels sprouts, cut side down. Cook without turning until they are a deep golden brown, about 15 minutes. Toss with the garlic and season with salt and pepper.