

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.

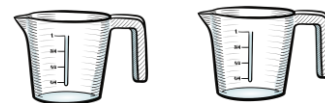
Measurements



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Weight

Volume

Freezing

- Select young stalks with compact tips. Wash and sort by size.
- Leave whole or cut in 1 to 2-inch lengths.
- Blanch in boiling water; small diameter spears 1-1/2 minutes, medium spears 2 minutes, large spears 3 minutes. Cool in ice water for an equivalent amount of time.
- Drain and pack in moisture-vapor proof freezer containers or freezer weight plastic bags, squeezing out as much air as possible. Seal, label and freeze.



Drying

Preparation: Wash, trim, and cut into equal lengths as desired.

Pretreatment: Blanch in boiling water 2-3 minutes or steam blanch 3-5 minutes. Drain well.

Drying Procedure:

- Arrange in single layers on drying trays.
- Dry at 140° F until crisp and brittle; approximately 4-6 hours. Cool thoroughly.
- Package dried asparagus in moisture/vapor proof containers. Label. Store in a cool, dark, dry place.



Boiling Water Bath Canning



Safety alert: Asparagus is a low acid food. Pressure canning is necessary when canning asparagus to prevent the growth of botulinum bacteria. Refer to National Center for Home Food Preservation for Pressure Canning instructions https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_04/asparagus_spears.html



Pickling

Pickled asparagus products may be safely preserved using the boiling water canning method. Because asparagus are a low acid food the proportion of vinegar to water in a pickling recipe is critical. Use only tested, approved pickling recipes and follow instruction for preparation of asparagus.

Pickled Asparagus

Yield: 6 wide mouth jars

- 10 pounds asparagus
- 6 large garlic cloves
- 4½ cups water
- 4½ cups white distilled vinegar (5% acidity)
- 6 small hot peppers (optional)
- ½ cup canning salt
- 3 teaspoons dill seed

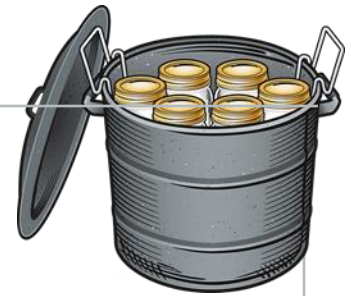
Wash asparagus, under running water. Cut into jar-length spears leaving ½-inch headspace. Peel and wash garlic cloves. Place a garlic clove and hot pepper (if desired) in the bottom of each jar.

In a large pot, combine water, vinegar, hot peppers (optional), salt and dill seed. Bring to boil. Tightly pack asparagus into hot jars with blunt ends down. Use only pint or 12-ounce jars, not quart size. Pour boiling hot pickling brine into jars, over spears, leaving ½-inch headspace.

Wipe rim with clean, damp paper towel. Adjust two-piece 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
Raw	Pints	10 minutes	15 minutes



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
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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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