

Eastern Washington has the perfect springtime weather conditions for growing asparagus. It is usually available during the months of April, May and June. The best quality asparagus is generally cut early in the season.

If you pick asparagus along the roadsides, ditch bank or in orchards, be extremely careful. These areas are often treated with weed control chemicals. Chemical residue is long lasting and it cannot be washed off. Asparagus heads would be impossible to scrub clean of residue even if it could be washed off the stalks. Some chemicals are residual in the soils through which asparagus tips must push as they emerge. It's better to hunt for asparagus in fields away from roadsides that are less likely to have been sprayed. Be sure to respect private property when picking asparagus.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR SAFETY

Vinegar is the key ingredient in a pickled asparagus recipe. There must be at least as much vinegar as water. If a recipe calls for less vinegar than water, increase the quantity of vinegar to equal the water. Any vinegar can be used as long as it is 5% acidity. White vinegar has a sharp pungent taste. Cider vinegar has a more mellow taste and the brine is not as clear as white vinegar. Sugar can be added to decrease the sour taste.

CUSTOMIZING

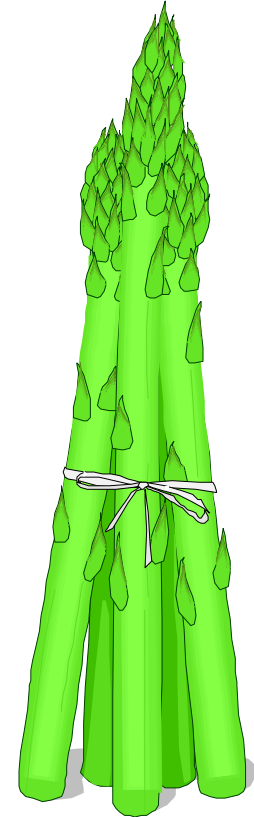
Spices in these recipes can be adjusted to suit personal taste. **Do not alter other ingredients.** You can increase the amount of spices called for or add additional spices. Some suggestions are: mustard seed, celery seed, dried red pepper flakes, cumin seed and lemon pepper.

Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination.

COMMON QUESTIONS

- Q. When I take my jars out of the canner, the asparagus is wrinkled. Is it safe?**
- A. Yes. The acidic brine sometimes pulls liquid out of the asparagus spears. It will probably plump up after sitting for about two weeks. It is perfectly safe to eat as long as it was prepared and processed correctly.
- Q. Why pack the asparagus with the tips down?**
- A. This will prevent the tips from breaking if the asparagus floats in the jars.
- Q. Finger-tip tighten lids—what does this mean?**
- A. Turn the jar band until you feel the first resistance and then tighten about 1-inch more.
- Q. My pickled asparagus is too tart. How can I correct that?**
- A. Cider vinegar makes a milder brine than white vinegar. You can also add sugar to the brine or to each jar individually to offset the acidic taste. Do not reduce the amount of vinegar.
- Q. There are little flakes on my pickled asparagus. What are they? Is the asparagus safe?**
- A. These flakes are called rutin and occur naturally in canned asparagus. The asparagus is perfectly safe to eat as long as it was prepared and processed correctly.
- Q. Why is my brine pink?**
- A. Pink brine is from the anthocyanin pigments. Certain growing conditions increase the amount of the pigment—generally cold nights. Since it is water soluble, it comes out in the brine.

PICKLING ASPARAGUS



Food preservation questions?
Contact WSU Douglas County Extension
(509) 745-8531

PICKLED ASPARAGUS WITH PICKLING SPICE

Yield: 4-5 quarts or 8 pints

16 cups asparagus spears or pieces
(about 8 pounds raw)

Brine:

2 quarts white vinegar (5% acid)
2 quarts water
1/2 cup pickling salt
1 tablespoon pickling spice
(remove cloves)

Per jar add:

1-2 cloves garlic

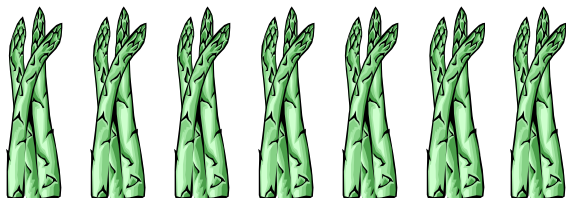


Wash asparagus under cool running water. Cut spears to fit jar leaving 1/2 inch head space.

Combine water, vinegar, salt and pickling spices (ties into a clean, thin white cloth) to make brine. Heat to boiling. Remove bag containing spices.

Pack asparagus into hot jars with tip ends down. Add garlic to each jar. Cover with boiling brine to within 1/2 inch from top of jar. Finger-tip tighten lids.

Process in boiling water bath for 10 minutes for pints or quarts, 15 minutes for 1,000-6,000 feet elevation.



WASHINGTON PICKLED ASPARAGUS

Yield: 4-5 quarts or 8 pints

16 cups asparagus spears
(about 8-10 pounds raw)

Brine:

2 quarts cider vinegar (5% acid)
2 quarts water
4 teaspoons sugar
1 teaspoon pepper
3 tablespoons pickling salt

Per jar add:

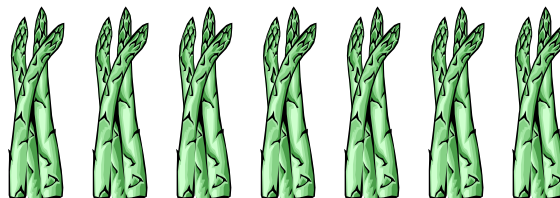
1-2 cloves garlic
1/2 to 1 teaspoon dill seed or a few
sprigs of fresh dill

Wash asparagus under cool running water. Cut spears to fit jar allowing for 1/2 inch head space.

Combine vinegar, water, sugar, salt and pepper. Heat to boiling.

Pack asparagus into hot jars with tip ends down. Add garlic and dill to each jar. Cover with boiling brine to within 1/2 inch from top of jar. Finger-tip tighten lids.

Process in boiling water bath for 10 minutes for pints or quarts, 15 minutes for 1,000-6,000 feet elevation.



SPICY CAJUN ASPARAGUS

Yield: 5-6 quarts

10 pounds asparagus

Brine:

2 3/4 quarts cider vinegar (5% acid)
2 1/2 quarts water
3/4 cup brown sugar
1/4 cup pickling salt



Per jar add:

1 teaspoon crushed red pepper
(more or less according to taste)
1 to 2 cloves garlic (sliced)
1 teaspoon cumin seed

Wash asparagus under cool running water. Cut spears to fit jar allowing for 1/2 inch head space.

Combine salt, vinegar, water and brown sugar. Heat to boiling.

Pack asparagus into hot jars with tip ends down. Add red pepper, cumin seed and garlic to each jar. Cover with boiling brine to within 1/2 inch from top of jar. Finger-tip tighten lids. Process in boiling water bath for 10 minutes for pints or quarts, 15 minutes for 1,000-6,000 feet elevation.

Process in boiling water bath for 10 minutes for pints or quarts, 15 minutes for 1,000-6,000 feet elevation.

