

Michigan asparagus has tasteful versatility

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Melt the butter in top of double boiler; stir in flour, salt and red pepper sauce. Blend in the milk. Add cheese, stirring until the sauce is smooth and thickened. Cover to keep warm. When asparagus is cooked, remove from water and place on a clean towel to drain. Then gather asparagus in bouquets and place in a serving dish. Garnish each bouquet with a pimiento strip. Pour sauce over asparagus. Sprinkle with chopped eggs. Makes 6 servings.

ASPARAGUS VICHYSOISE

1 (10½ oz.) can of Michigan asparagus pieces, undrained or 1 lb. of fresh, cooked
1 cup water

¼ cup chopped onion
1 tsp. instant chicken bouillon
¼ cup potato flakes
1 cup coffee cream
1½ tsp. salt and pepper
Dairy sour cream and chopped chives

Puree Michigan asparagus; set aside. In saucepan, combine water, onion and bouillon. Bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer 5 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in potato flakes. Add asparagus, cream and seasoning. Chill thoroughly. Serve with the sour cream and chives. Makes 4-6 servings.

SUKIYAKI, MICHIGAN STYLE

1 lb. sirloin, cut ¼-inch thick, thinly sliced

2 tsp. shortening
1 cup diagonally sliced celery
11 oz. fresh or canned Michigan asparagus pieces, cooked and drained
1 cup thinly sliced onion
1 clove garlic, minced
½ cup sliced mushrooms
¼ cup water
2 tsp. sherry
1 tsp. soy sauce
1 tsp. cornstarch
1 tsp. salt
1 beef bouillon cube, optional
½ tsp. sugar
¼ tsp. ginger

Heat shortening in heavy pan; add meat, celery, onion and garlic; stir fry over high heat 1 minute. Add mushrooms; stir fry 1 minute. Add cooked asparagus; heat 1 minute.

Blend remaining ingredients together. Add to meat mixture. Cook and stir until sauce thickens. Serve plain or with hot rice as desired. Makes 4 servings.

HAWAIIAN ASPARAGUS

3 cups canned or fresh Michigan asparagus pieces
1 cup onion, wedged and separated in strips
4 oz. cashew nuts
4 tsp. cooking oil or butter
1 (16 oz.) can of pineapple chunks packed in its own juice, drained; juice reserved
2 tsp. granulated sugar
2 tsp. cornstarch
1 tsp. fresh lemon juice
¼ cup raisins
Pinch of salt

Combine in a small saucepan; reserved pineapple juice, sugar, cornstarch and salt. Cook over medium heat until thickened, stirring occasionally. Add lemon juice, pineapple chunks and raisins. Stir, cover and keep warm. Meanwhile, stir-fry vegetables; heat cooking oil in large fry pan over medium heat. Add Michigan asparagus and onions. Stir and cook about 3 minutes. When vegetables are done, add cashews. Stir slightly. Pour sauce over mixture and serve at once.

RA RA PIE

1 cup fresh or canned Michigan asparagus pieces

2 cups raubarb, diced
1 cup sugar
2 tbsp. cornstarch
1 tbsp. light corn syrup
1 tsp. melted butter
1 tsp. lemon juice
3 tbsp. water

Parboil Michigan asparagus 4-5 minutes. Drain and combine with raubarb. Mix sugar and cornstarch and add to raubarb/asparagus mixture. Add lemon juice, water and lemon juice. Cook on medium-low heat to thicken slightly. Pour into a pastry-lined 9-inch pie pan. Cover with top crust. Seal and bake 30-35 minutes at 425°.

Candy dipping demands patience

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2 cups half and half
¼ cup butter or margarine
½ tsp. salt
1 tsp. vanilla
¼ cup chopped nuts

1. Combine sugars, corn syrup, half and half and butter and salt in a 3-quart saucepan. Heat over low heat until boiling, stirring constantly. Clip a candy thermometer to outside of pan (tip should not touch bottom) stirring slowly and constantly until thermometer reaches 245° (this takes about 1 hour).
2. Remove from heat, stir in vanilla, turn caramel mixture into a buttered 8-inch square pan. Let cool completely. Turn onto a buttered platter, cut into 1-inch squares. Because caramel absorbs moisture from the air, store in a cool dry place no longer than 2 days. If wrapped individually, they can be stored for up to 2 months.

PEPPERMINT PATTIES

Makes about 1 pound
2 cups sugar
¼ cup water
2 tsp. light corn syrup
¼ tsp. salt
½ tsp. peppermint extract
1 drop green food color, if desired

1. Combine sugar, water, corn syrup and salt in a 3-quart saucepan. Heat over low heat, stirring constantly until sugar dissolves, about 10 minutes. Cook covered to allow steam to wash down any granules on side for 3 minutes. Uncover, clip candy thermometer to side and cook

without stirring until thermometer registers 240° (about 45 minutes). Pour syrup no thicker than ¼ inch on a large oven proof platter. Cool without disturbing for 30 minutes.

2. Beat syrup with a wooden spoon until white and creamy. Turn onto a clean, smooth surface, knead in peppermint extract and food color. Refrigerate, wrapped in waxed paper overnight to mellow the flavor.

3. Line baking sheets with waxed paper. Shape about 1 teaspoon of the mixture into a ball. Repeat with remaining mix. Place 2 inches apart on a baking sheet, cover with waxed paper, flatten into patties about ¼

inch thick, using the bottom of glass. Let stand 12 hours, flip, let stand 3 hours to dry. Dip within 2 days.

CHEF'S HINT: Make the patties small because the bigger ones are hard to dip. Personally speaking, I'd rather buy them, it's so much easier.

Chef Larry Jones is a Livonia resident and graduate of the culinary arts program at Schoolcraft College. If you have any questions regarding his column, please send them to Chef Larry Jones, c/o The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

Asparagus harvest reaches its peak

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When buying fresh Michigan asparagus, the MAAB advises looking for stalks that are firm, green and crisp. Look for tightly closed, compact tips rich in green color, and be sure the white butt is not attached. If it is, or if the Michigan asparagus logo is not displayed, you're not buying Michigan asparagus.

When storing fresh asparagus, make sure to keep the spears clean, cold and covered. Wash them in cold water, pat dry and store in a moisture-proof wrapping. Use the

spears within two to three days for the best quality.

To freeze, the MAAB suggests washing the asparagus thoroughly in cold water, and then blanching it in boiling water for one to two minutes. Cool the blanched asparagus in ice water, drain well and pack in plastic freezer bags or containers. Do not defrost the asparagus before cooking and do not refreeze.

The MAAB maintains retail prices for Michigan asparagus range between 79 cents and \$1.09 per pound.

cooking calendar

GOURMET COOKING

Classes for singles will be offered for the first time by The Community House in Birmingham. The classes, for singles of all ages will begin Wednesday, June 3 and run on consecutive Wednesdays throughout the month. Instructors Penny and Geoff Banks will discuss the presentation of food and will introduce students to stores in the area that carry the unusual spices and produce necessary for the dishes, as well as give guidelines for choosing the wine or beverage that will enhance the meal.

On June 3 students will prepare special international appetizers such as Scotch Eggs, Shetland and Mantel accompanied by Greek wines; on June 10 a tasty dinner of hot and spicy Indian and Creole dishes will be prepared; on June 17 students will prepare Paella and enjoy a tasting of Spanish wines; and on June 24 students will learn how to prepare Thai Curries and unusual Chinese dishes, including Lychees, followed by a Chinese beer tasting.

Cost of each evening is \$22, which includes hands-on cooking instruction, recipes, the meal and beverages. The class runs from 6:30-9:30 p.m. For further information, or to register, call the program department at The Community House, 644-5832.

Mild flavor of potatoes is sweet

AP — The season's first tiny new potatoes deserve special treatment. This salad shows off their mild, sweet flavor.

NEW POTATO SALAD

1 lb. tiny new potatoes, quartered
2 cups fresh pea pods, bias-sliced
¼ cup dairy sour cream
¼ cup mayonnaise or salad dressing
1 tsp. dried dillweed
3 tbsp. snipped chives
¼ tsp. salt
Lettuce leaves

Cook potatoes, covered, in a small amount of boiling water for 8 minutes. Add pea pods to saucepan; cover and cook 2-4 minutes. Drain thoroughly; cool. Stir together sour cream, mayonnaise, dill, chives and salt. Cover and chill. Line salad plates with lettuce. Mound potato mixture in center. Drizzle dressing over each salad. Makes 8 servings.
Nutrition information per serving: 122 calories, 2 g protein, 13 g carbohydrates, 7 g fat, 7 mg cholesterol, 117 mg sodium. U.S. RDA: 25 percent vitamin C.

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