

# Lowfat soup created with beef, asparagus and potatoes

**BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**  
Spring brings the pleasure of seasonal fresh foods, to marry with heartier fare for low-fat but satisfying family meals.

This Beef, Asparagus and Potato Soup is a meal in itself, simple to prepare from scratch after work. Pieces of lean top sirloin are quickly stir-fried, then added to a mixture of potatoes, onion, ginger and carrots that have simmered in beef broth until tender. Fresh or frozen asparagus is added near the end of cooking.

The dish is nutritious, needs no accompaniments and contains no more than 10 grams of fat per serving.

## BEEF, POTATO AND ASPARAGUS SOUP

(Preparation and cooking time 40 minutes)

- 1 pound boneless beef top sirloin steak, cut 3/4-inch thick
- 2 13-3/4- to 14-1/2-ounce cans ready-to-serve beef broth
- 2 large potatoes, about 1 pound, cut into 3/4-inch pieces
- 1 large carrot, cut diagonally into 1/4-inch-thick slices

- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh ginger
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- Salt and pepper
- 12 ounces fresh asparagus spears, trimmed, cut into 1-1/2-inch pieces, or 10-ounce package frozen asparagus cuts, defrosted

Cut beef steak lengthwise into thirds, then crosswise into 1/2-inch-thick strips. Combine broth, potatoes, carrot, onion and ginger in large saucepan; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, 12 to 15 minutes or until vegetables are tender.

Meanwhile, heat 1/2 tablespoon oil in large nonstick skillet over medium heat until hot. Add half of beef; stir-fry 1 to 2 minutes or until surface of beef is no longer pink. Remove from skillet. Repeat with 1/2 tablespoon oil and remaining beef. Season beef with salt and pepper, as desired.

Add asparagus to soup; cook 2 to 3 minutes or until crisp-tender. Stir in beef; cook just until heated through. Makes 4 servings (about 2 cups each). *Nutrition information per serving: 338 cal., 32 g pro., 30 g carbo., 10 g fat, 999 mg sodium*



**Versatile basil:** The aromatic leaves of this healthful herb can be used with fresh and cooked vegetables, in salads, soups and breads, and for seasoning vinegars and oils. This Warm Italian Salad features basil and tomatoes, a natural mix for the herb and vegetable.

# Basil sharpens vegetables

Hints of mint, anise and pepper come to mind with the sharp, refreshing flavor of basil, a favorite seasoning for Italian foods and many other ethnic cuisines. The aromatic leaves of this healthful herb can be used with fresh and cooked vegetables, in salads, in soups and breads, and for seasoning vinegars and oils.

Native to India, basil reached the Mediterranean region in ancient times. Basil inherits its name from the Greek word for king, and in France it is still known as "l'herbe royale." The warming properties of basil were prized as a remedy for coughs, sore throats and head colds.

Perhaps best known as a basic ingredient in Italian pesto, as well as the related pistou of southern France, basil combines well with garlic and olive oil. The herb has a natural affinity with tomatoes and is sensational in pepper, zucchini and eggplant dishes, as well as recipes for pasta, potatoes, beans, rice and other grains. Basil is also a popular herb in Thai cooking and is used in curries, stir-fries, fish and chicken dishes.

Tearing rather than chopping the leaves helps bring out basil's flavor. Since the aromatic basil

oil vanishes rapidly when exposed to heat, it's best to use only a little basil during cooking, then add more at the very last minute to a dish.

## WARM ITALIAN SALAD

- 3 medium tomatoes, cut into thin wedges
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 roasted red pepper, cut into thin strips
- 10 pitted black olives, sliced
- 1/2 cup fat-free Italian dressing
- 4 whole grain rolls or 8 Italian bread slices
- 1/4 cup shredded reduced-fat mozzarella
- 1/4 cup shredded fresh basil

Preheat the broiler. In a medium bowl, combine tomatoes, onion, red pepper and olives. Add dressing; toss well to coat. Let stand for 20 minutes. Spoon tomato mixture evenly onto rolls. Place sandwiches on a baking sheet. Sprinkle with mozzarella. Broil 4 inches from heat, until cheese melts and edges of rolls are golden, about 2 minutes. Sprinkle with basil and serve immediately.

*Recipe courtesy of the American Institute for Cancer Research.*

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in gravy for a new tasty treat. Herbs and spices offer a low-sodium way to season and makes ordinary food taste extraordinary.

Preparing extra is a good way to always have food "ready to go." Rice, potato or pasta can be frozen for use later. When there is a night when you are just too tired or too rushed to cook, have some homemade dinners made from leftovers ready to microwave.

If you don't enjoy eating solo, invite a friend or neighbor over at mealtime on a regular basis. Create interest in meals by using attractive place mats or trays. Choose a pleasant spot to eat perhaps by a window. Pay attention to how the food looks

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on the plate. Whether you are cooking for one, two or 10, food tastes better if it looks good.

Eating alone doesn't have to mean you're eating poorly.

*Lois M. Thieleke of Birmingham is an Extension Home Economist for the Michigan State University Extension — Oakland County. For answers to food questions, call the hot-line (248) 868-0904.*

Here are recipes from "Glorious Grapes and Other Fabulous Fruit Recipes" by Barbara Burman. See related story on Taste front.

## LIME AND HONEY-ROASTED CHICKEN WITH GRAPES

6 assorted chicken pieces (legs and breasts)

Grated rind and juice of one large lime

2 cloves of garlic, minced

Salt and pepper

2 cups black grapes (halved and seeded)

1/4 cup honey

1/4 cup soy sauce

1 tablespoon sesame seeds

Place chicken pieces in a large non-reactive bowl.

Combine lime rind, juice and garlic. Pour mixture over chicken and let marinate in refrigerator for one hour, or overnight.

Arrange chicken pieces in large shallow roasting pan or dish in a single layer. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Roast, uncovered, in a 375° F oven for 45 minutes. Remove chicken from oven and pour off pan juices. Add grapes to ribs.

Combine honey and soy sauce. Spoon sauce over chicken pieces and sprinkle with sesame seeds. Return to oven, basting occasionally with sauce for 15 minutes more, or until chicken is nicely glazed. Makes 6 servings.

## WARM BACON-SPINACH SALAD WITH GRAPES

1 large bunch spinach, washed and stemmed (8 cups packed)

6 slices bacon

1 small red onion

2 cloves garlic, minced

1/4 cup olive oil

2 tablespoons cider vinegar

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

1 cup black grapes, halved and seeded

3/4 cup aged cheddar

cheese, cut into small cubes

Salt and black pepper

Place spinach in a large salad bowl and set aside. Cook bacon in a large skillet over medium heat until crisp. Place on paper towels to drain. When cool, crumble and reserve. Drain all but one tablespoon of bacon drippings from skillet.

Return skillet to heat and add onion and garlic. Cook, stirring, for 2 minutes or until softened. Remove from heat.

Combine oil, vinegar and mustard until smooth. Add to skillet and return to heat. Cook, stirring, until almost boiling. Immediately pour over spinach and toss.

Add grapes, reserved bacon bits and cheddar cubes. Season with salt, if necessary, and generous amount of pepper to taste. Gently toss. Divide among salad plates and serve immediately. Makes 4 servings.

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