

2020 Empire Asparagus Festival Recipe Book

Presented by the Empire Chamber of Commerce



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by Empire Chamber of Commerce

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A collection of asparagus-themed recipes collected during the 2020 Virtual Asparagus Festival, hosted by the Empire Chamber of Commerce.

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In Celebration of the Asparagus



Each year, the village of Empire in northern Michigan celebrates the arrival of spring—and the asparagus crop—with local food, beer, and music on Front Street. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic leading up to the 2020 event, the Empire Chamber of Commerce, who typically hosts the weekend-long event, was forced to cancel all in-person events. Not wanting to skip the festivities entirely, the Chamber worked with local businesses to allow some long-standing traditions of the festival to be experienced virtually.

Participants were still able to submit poetry for the “Ode to the Asparagus” competition, hosted in partnership with the Glen Lake Library. Many gathered virtually for an online poetry reading on Saturday, May 16, the day of the scheduled festival. The “Kick Yer Ass-paragus 5k Run/Walk” still welcomed participants via an online platform; everyone who signs up will receive a 2020 Asparagus Festival T-shirt, with artwork from the late Tim Lewis. While a virtual recipe contest didn’t allow for taste-testing, many still sent their favorite asparagus recipes in to be included in this book, the 2020 Empire Asparagus Festival Recipe Book! All who entered were included in a drawing, where three individuals were awarded prizes from Grocer’s Daughter Chocolates and the Empire Chamber of Commerce.

While it would have been preferred to gather in person as we have done for the past sixteen years, we are grateful to those who still participated in the Asparagus Festival by submitting poetry and recipes, or by running or walking the 5k at home. Thank you especially to Grocer’s Daughter Chocolates for their contribution to our prizes, and to the Glen Arbor Sun for helping to get the word out. Thank you to the Glen Lake Library for hosting yet another wonderful year of poetry, and to Mel & Fell for sharing your food expertise as we put together this little booklet of asparagus recipes.

The Harbinger of Spring by Mel & Fell

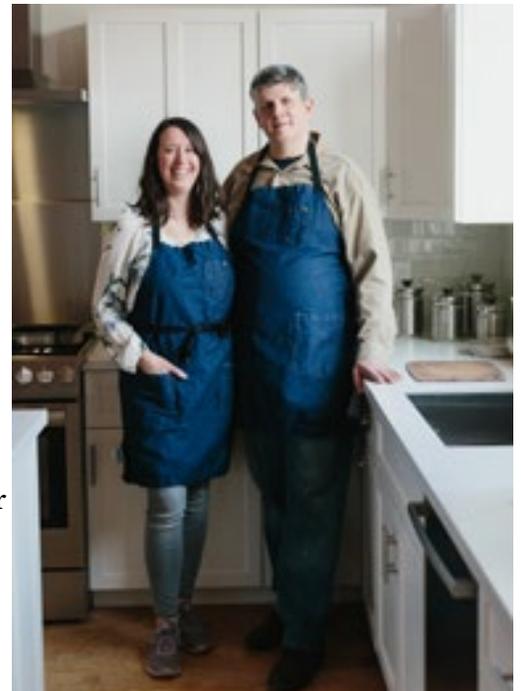
Mel & Fell is a catering company based in Empire, run by residents Melanie and Tim Griffith. They have been food vendors at past Asparagus Festivals, and this year assisted in compiling the asparagus recipe submissions. Throughout the Coronavirus pandemic, they have fed the Empire community by offering a weekly meal delivery service. The service began just before the pandemic, and they have plans to continue it indefinitely. We asked Mel & Fell to share some of their favorite asparagus recipes with us, which you will find later in this book, as well as to share some of their thoughts on this magnificent vegetable.

“
Asparagus is the harbinger of spring, the first agricultural crop to arrive when we are starved for fresh produce and a change from our comforting winter diet.

We drive daily in May to Norconk’s farm stand, waiting for those first spears. Then, for the next five to six weeks, we gorge ourselves. We make soups, salads, Asian-inspired fresh rolls. A favorite pairing is runny eggs and toast with our asparagus for breakfast. What we don’t eat immediately gets pickled for later use, with a few ramps for an added kick.

We have always loved the Empire Asparagus festival; it’s a chance for our small community to come together to celebrate surviving another winter and the arrival of spring!”

-Melanie & Tim Griffith
Mel & Fell
Empire, MI



RECIPES

Asparagus Panzanella Salad

Submitted by Mel & Fell
Empire, MI

Serves 4

Preheat your oven to 350

Prep time: 40 minutes

Ingredients:

1 pound asparagus, chopped
1 6 oz bag baby spinach or mixed greens
1 cucumber, seeded and diced
1 small red onion, small diced
2 cups grape tomatoes, sliced in half length wise
6 slices of sour dough, cut into large cubes
1 1/2 cup olive oil, divided
1/2 cup sherry vinegar
1/4 cup Dijon mustard

Directions:

1. Put a pot of salted water on to boil. When it reaches a boil, add the asparagus and cook for 2 to 3 minutes or until the asparagus is tender. Immediately put into ice water to stop the cooking.
2. Put the bread cubes on a baking tray and drizzle with 1/2 cup olive oil, salt and pepper. Bake in a preheated oven for 5 to 10 minutes or until the bread is crisp and dry, remove from the oven and allow it to cool.
3. Mix all the vegetables in a large bowl with the asparagus.
4. To make the dressing, put the mustard in a separate bowl. Then, slowly add the remaining 1 cup olive oil while whisking, add the sherry vinegar. Taste and adjust the seasonings.
5. To assemble, add the dressing to the vegetables and toss to coat. Ten minutes before serving add the bread and toss until just combined.

Asparagus Salsa

Submitted by Sean C.
Suttons Bay, MI

Watch Sean's instructional video for this recipe [here!](#)

Ingredients:

15-20 stalks asparagus
2 green bell peppers
6 medium tomatoes
1 yellow onion
1 cup cilantro
2 limes
12 cloves garlic
1 T honey
1 T olive oil
1 tsp salt
1 tsp pepper
1 great attitude!

Directions:

1. Dice it all up (de-seed peppers)
2. Add honey, S+P, olive oil
3. Puree everything using a food processor
4. Enjoy!
5. ¡VIVA LA ASPARAGUS!



Asparagus Roll-up Hors d'oeuvres

Submitted by Kathy C.
Empire, MI

Ingredients:

Sliced Pepperidge Farm-type bread
1 egg yolk, beaten
1 8-oz pkg. Philadelphia cream cheese (softened)
3 oz. crumbed Blue Cheese
1 bunch asparagus
melted butter

Directions:

1. Roll slices of Pepperidge Farm-type bread thin with a rolling pin, trim off crusts
2. Mix together: beaten egg yolk, cream cheese (softened), and Bleu cheese
3. Spread the mixture 1/4 inch thick on each slice of bread
4. Place 3 asparagus spears on each slice of bread and roll up
5. Roll in melted butter
6. Freeze
7. When frozen, thaw slightly and cut each roll into three pieces
8. Bake at 400 for about 15 minutes.
9. Enjoy!

*When making this for a party, we use 4 x the cheese/egg ingredients, 3 loaves of thick Pepperidge Farm bread and 2 bunches of asparagus.

Asparagus Soup

Submitted by [Bob A.](#)
Frankfort, MI

Ingredients:

2 Lbs. FRESH Asparagus
Big white onion chopped
Two medium russet potatoes peeled and diced
One large clove of garlic chopped
Chicken stock – 1 quart
Half and Half / 8 oz.
Pad of butter
Tarragon
Salt and Pepper

Directions:

Even as fresh as these asparagus are, I still cut off the ends (about 3 inches) and make a fifteen-minute stock in my soup pot boiling them in a quart of water. I discard them in case they have remnant fiber strands. I then add a quart of chicken stock, chopped onion, garlic, and potatoes. Add the next third of the asparagus in one-inch slices and simmer twenty minutes. I use an immersion blender for a quick spin, but it is not necessary if you like the chunks. Near the end, I add the chopped asparagus tips, half and half, butter, Tarragon, salt and pepper, and simmer for fifteen minutes.

Focaccia Spring Bouquet

Submitted by Anna B.
Suttons Bay, MI

Ingredients:

16 ounces (454 g or 2 cups) warm water (110°F) divided into two bowls
 1 Tablespoon granulated sugar
 7 grams (2 1/2 teaspoons) active dry yeast
 2 ounces (57 g or 1/4 cup) olive oil
 1 teaspoon salt
 1 Tablespoon flakey salt
 24 ounces (680 g or 5 cups spooned and leveled) bread flour or all-purpose flour
 4 ounces (113 g or 1/2 cup) olive oil for the pan and for drizzling on top of the focaccia after rising
 2 Tablespoons fresh rosemary chopped
 Asparagus and other vegetables (peppers/tomatoes/onion/parsley/basil) of your choice to make a masterpiece spring bouquet using your focaccia as the canvas!

Equipment:

Stand mixer with a dough hook

Directions:

1. Combine your first cup of warm water with your yeast and sugar and mix to combine. Set it aside for about 5 minutes or until it looks foamy
2. Place the water/yeast mixture in the bowl of your stand mixer with the bread hook attached. You can also make this dough by hand with a bowl and spoon but you'll have to use some elbow grease.
3. Add in about 1 cup of flour and mix on low until combined
4. Add in the rest of your water, the olive oil and the salt and half of your remaining flour. Mix on low until combined
5. Continue adding in your flour while mixing on low until the dough pulls away from the sides of the bowl. If it's still too sticky, add in a couple more Tablespoons of flour until it comes together. The dough will be very soft though
6. Keep mixing on low until your dough develops enough gluten that when you touch it, it bounces back. I took my dough out of the bowl and finished kneading it on the countertop for about 2 minutes until the dough bounced back.
7. Place your dough into a bowl with about a Tablespoon of olive oil. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place for 1-2 hours or until it has doubled in size. If you're using active dry yeast, it will take longer to proof to double. Keep an eye on it.
8. Pour enough olive oil into a 12"x17" sheet pan (or any pan of similar size) so there is a thin layer of oil covering the entire bottom of the pan
9. Put some olive oil on your hands to prevent sticking and then pull the focaccia dough out of the bowl. It will be very loose. Divide into two if you desire. Lay it in the pan and begin stretching it. If it shrinks back, walk away for about 15 minutes to let the gluten relax before you stretch again. Don't worry about getting it to the edges if you divided it in half.

RECIPES

(FOCCACIA SPRING BOUQUET PT. 2)

10. Once you're done stretching, cover it with plastic wrap and place it into the fridge overnight to develop flavor.
11. When you're ready to bake your bread, take it out of the fridge and let it warm up for about 30 minutes. Dimple the surface with your oiled fingers to create some areas where the olive oil can collect.
12. Drizzle a good amount olive oil onto the top of the bread until all the dimples have a little oil in them. Sprinkle flakey salt on top.
13. After your focaccia has risen for 30 minutes, decorate to make your spring garden bouquet. Get creative by using your asparagus as the stems to your bouquet of flowers and tomatoes or peppers as the flowers! You could even use an asparagus top as a leaf! Or make a mini garden scape with asparagus coming out of the ground and a sunshine from peppers in the corner! Or get creative yourself!
14. Once done, drizzle with olive oil and season with salt and pepper.
15. Brush all your veggies and herbs with more olive oil to prevent burning.
16. Bake in the oven at 450°F for 20-25 minutes or until the focaccia bread is nice and golden.
17. Because of the toppings, this bread is best enjoyed the day of. Refrigerate leftovers. Re-heating the bread in the oven for 5-10 minutes at 350°F will bring back that chewy texture.

Lemongrass Asparagus Noodles

Submitted by Mel & Fell
Empire, MI

Ingredients:

4 TB vegetable oil, divided
3 cloves garlic, chopped
2 lemongrass stalks, chopped
1 red chili (seeds removed) chopped fine, omit if you like.
2 TB chopped ginger
2 qts chicken stock
1 pound fully cooked chicken breast, diced
1 pound asparagus, chopped (save the woody ends.)
8 oz cremini mushroom ,sliced
2 baby bok choy ,sliced
juice from 1 lime
1 lime quartered
1/4 cup picked cilantro leaves
1 oz basil sliced (save the stems)
1 pound rice noodles

Directions:

1. In a stockpot on medium heat add 2 TB of the oil. When the oil, is hot add the the garlic, ginger, lemongrass, and chili and saute for 1 minute stirring constantly. Add the chicken stock, asparagus ends and basil stems and simmer the stock for 30 minutes until asparagus ends are soft.
2. Strain off the solids from the stock into a separate container, reserving the liquid.
3. Put the pot back on the stove, add 2 TB of oil to the pot, add the mushrooms and saute until tender about 5 minutes, add the bok choy and continue to cook for 5 more minutes.
4. Add the broth back to the pot with the mushrooms and bok choy. Add the chicken breast and chopped asparagus.
5. Bring the broth to a simmer, cook until the asparagus is tender. Add the soy sauce to taste as well as the lime juice.
6. Cook the rice noodles according to the package instructions.
7. To serve in a soup bowl, divide the noodles equally add the broth equally to each bowl garnish with the basil and cilantro leaves.

Leelanau Sushi Roll

Submitted by Kassia M.

Makes 4 servings

Ingredients:

2 cups sushi rice, cooked
2 Tbs. rice vinegar
2 Tbs. sugar
1 Tbs. kosher salt
4 half sheets nori seaweed
4 oz. smoked salmon, preferably from Carlson's Fish
4 oz. Idyll Farms Mont Idyll cheese
4 - 6 asparagus stalks, trimmed

Directions:

Combine the rice vinegar, sugar, and salt in a small bowl and microwave 30 - 45 seconds, or until the liquid is hot enough to dissolve the sugar and salt. Transfer the rice into a large mixing bowl and fold in vinegar mixture until thoroughly combined. Cover and allow to cool to room temperature.

Place a sheet of nori on a sushi-rolling mat with the rough side facing up, lengthwise. With wet hands, spread a layer of rice on the nori, leaving about 1 inch of nori uncovered at the top. Arrange in a horizontal row 1 inch from the bottom: smoked salmon, goat cheese, asparagus.

Grab both the nori and the mat, and roll, squeezing down to press together.

Transfer the roll to a cutting board, slice into six equal portions with a damp knife.

Enjoy!

Asparagus Rollups

Submitted by Ann T.
Kodak, Tennessee

Ingredients:

1 package medium size soft tortillas
1 carton soft cream cheese.
4 asparagus spears for each tortilla you want to prepare
Butter, melted
Parmesan cheese

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees
Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper.
Bring water to boil in large skillet or saucepan

Break ends off asparagus stalks.
Wash the tender stalks and cook until tender-crisp, about 6-8 minutes.
Drain in colander. Put a few ice cubes on top while you prepare tortillas.

Spread the cream cheese on each tortilla from the middle to about 1/8 of an inch from the edge.

Drain asparagus thoroughly.

Place four asparagus spears next to each other on each tortilla, alternating stem ends and tip ends.

Roll each tortilla tightly and place seam side down on parchment-lined cookie sheet.
Brush generously with melted butter and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.

Bake at 350 degrees for 10 or 12 minutes or until lightly browned.

Cut rollups in half before serving.

Asparagus Ham & Egg Brunch Rolls



Submitted by Julian

Ingredients:

4 eggs, hard boiled
White sauce
Handful of asparagus stalks
4-6 slices of ham
1/4 cup cheddar cheese
Paprika to taste
Pineapple slices (optional)
Pineapple sauce (optional)
Chocolate sauce (optional)

Directions:

1. Hard boil 4 eggs and slice
2. Butter an 8 x8 glass dish or individual ramekins
3. Make your favorite white sauce -1 1/2 cup
4. Steam a handful of asparagus stalks (1lb) for 3 minutes or until tender.
5. Mix 1/2 white sauce with the eggs (chopped) and 1 tsp parsley.
6. Set out 4-6 ham slices fill with egg mixture and asparagus Spears and make rolls to set in dish.
7. Cover with rest of white sauce and sprinkle with paprika and cover with 1/4 cup (or more) of cheddar cheese
8. Bake at 375 until melted-approximately 10 min.

Serving suggestion: I serve with fresh pineapple slices and pineapple sauce with drizzled chocolate, my 91-year-old Mother's favorite brunch!

Kick Yer Ass-paragus Swiss Dip

Submitted by Jan B.
Traverse City, MI

Ingredients:

2/3 cup mayonnaise
1/3 cup softened cream cheese
1 T. stone ground or other mustard
1/4 tsp. garlic powder or minced garlic
1 T. dried dill
3 c. shredded Swiss cheese
1 14.5 oz. can (about 2/3 c.) asparagus OR 2/3 c. shredded fresh asparagus
1/3 c. dry bread crumbs
1/2 cup chopped pecans (separated in 1/2)
sliced baguette, crackers or pita triangles

Directions:

1. In large bowl, combine mayonnaise, cream cheese, mustard, and garlic.
2. Add Swiss cheese and crumbs and mix well. Stir in asparagus and 1/4 c. pecans.
3. Spread in dish; sprinkle on rest of pecans and bake uncovered, 25 - 30 minutes.
4. Serve warm with baguette etc.
5. Be creative in ingredients if the shutdown keeps you from shopping! Enjoy!

Spring Vegetable Risotto

Submitted by Mae S.
Interlochen, MI

Serves 2-4

Ingredients:

1 bunch asparagus, cut into 2-inch pieces
4 carrots, peeled and julienned
6 cups vegetable stock
1/2 c dry white wine
1-2 TB olive oil
2 garlic cloves, minced
2 bunches scallions or ramps
2 cups arborio rice
1 cup frozen baby green peas, thawed
salt and pepper, to taste

Directions:

1. Steam asparagus and carrots until tender, about 10 minutes. Transfer to bowl and set aside.
2. Add stock and wine to saucepan, heat to simmering.
3. In a large saute pan, heat oil over medium heat. Add garlic and scallions or ramps. Cook until softened. Add rice and cook stirring constantly for 2 minutes.
4. Reduce heat to medium, add 1 cup of simmering stock. Stir until absorbed. Continue to add stock slowly until all the liquid has been absorbed and the rice softens, about 20 min.
5. Stir in peas and add another cup of stock. Stir constantly until the liquid is almost absorbed, and the rice thickens. Stir in steamed veggies, adding more stock if needed, until mixture is creamy and the rice is tender; about 5 minutes.
6. Remove from heat and stir in salt and pepper. Serve at once.

Oh Canada Bacon, Egg + Asparagus



Submitted by David B.
Royal Oak, MI

Ingredients:

Butter
4 slices Canadian Bacon
Bunch of asparagus
1 egg
Salt, to taste
“Everything but the Bagel” seasoning mix, to taste
Splash of chicken stock
Parmesean or other dry Italian cheese

Directions:

1. Dice 4 slices Canadian Bacon
2. Melt butter in sauté pan
3. Add bacon and asparagus to pan together – add a splash of chicken stock and cover for 3 minutes
4. Season with salt and “Everything but the Bagel” seasoning mix
5. Take cover off and brown bacon and cook asparagus until al dente
6. Transfer asparagus and bacon to bowl
7. Deglaze the pan with splash of chicken stock
8. Fry egg over easy in same pan
9. Arrange asparagus attractively on plate
10. Top with egg, bacon, and parmesan (or other dry Italian cheese)