



Foodservice Asparagus

Brought to you by the Australian Asparagus Council

Around the world chefs and home cooks alike become excited when asparagus appears in early spring, as this not only signifies that the weather is warming up nicely but that there is much delicious eating to be had.

Asparagus is loved for its unique herbaceous flavour, distinctive shape, versatility and health giving properties. Diners and families actively seek Australian asparagus when in season and it is loved for its freshness and great eating qualities. Australian asparagus is also held in high esteem on the global market.

Where produced

More than 95 percent of Australia's asparagus is grown in Victoria.

Seasonal availability

Spring / summer (with the main season being in spring).

Growing, harvesting and handling

- The asparagus plant thrives in warm weather with humidity and moderate rainfall. It is very sensitive to adverse weather conditions including excessive rainfall and extreme temperatures (both hot and cold).
- Asparagus is also vulnerable to frost, wind, hail, heat, lack of water and excessive water due to flooding.
- Asparagus harvesting is labour intensive. The spears are cut by hand, usually in the cool of the night and early morning to retain maximum freshness.
- From the field, freshly cut asparagus spears are transported to the packing shed where loose and bunched spears are often packed upright into specially designed boxes, which have a flared base to accommodate the asparagus spears (the butts are thicker in diameter than the spearheads).
- Once packed the asparagus is hydro-cooled to remove field heat and is placed immediately in cool storage.

Storage and Handling

- Maintenance of the cool chain is vital to prevent continued growth of the spears and deterioration in quality and storage life.
- Once received, good temperature management of between 0°C – 2°C must be maintained.
- Store asparagus in original boxes.
- Asparagus should not be stored near airflow in your cooler.
- Asparagus behaves somewhat like cut flowers so keep up the humidity e.g. if necessary, cover boxes with clean damp tea towels.

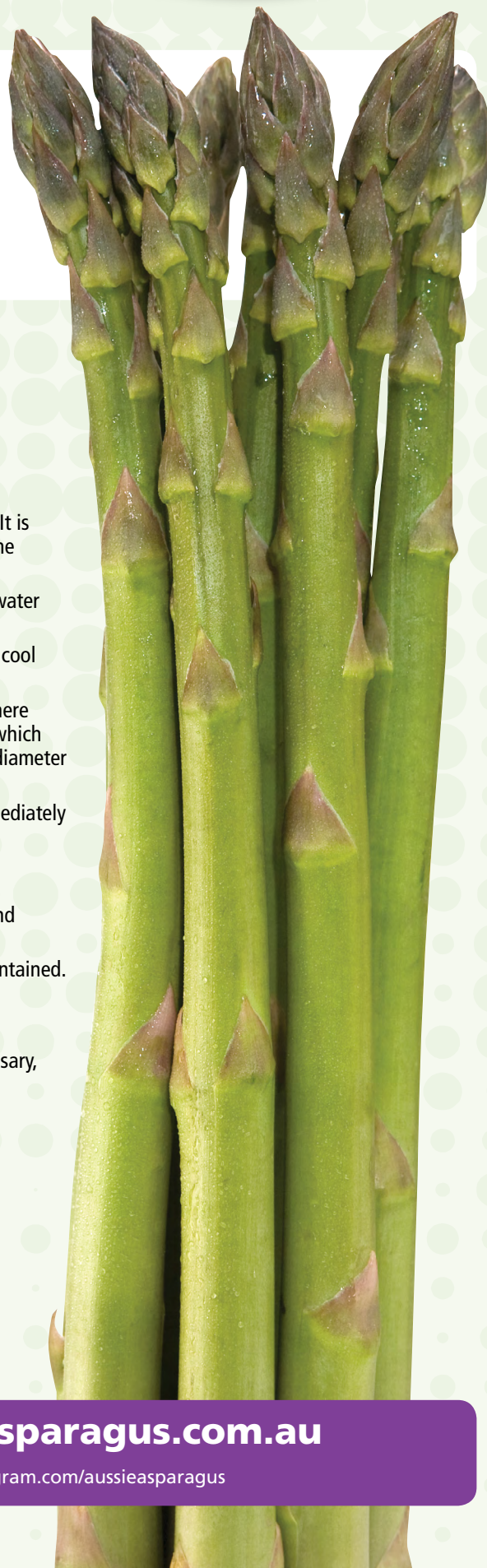
Bunch sizes

Asparagus is available loose and in a variety of bunch sizes:

- Regular bunches (about 185g) - the most common size
- 500g bunches - great for family meals and BBQs
- 100g 'mini' bunches - trimmed and ready to use.

Selecting asparagus

- Look for firm, bright, smooth, spears of uniform size with closed, compact tips.
- When you snap fresh asparagus, it should be crisp, moist and juicy.



For more information visit asparagus.com.au



facebook.com/asparagusCouncil



instagram.com/aussieasparagus



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Varieties

Most of the asparagus produced in Australia is green asparagus with a very limited amount of purple asparagus as outlined below. White asparagus is not currently produced in large-scale commercial quantities due to the high costs of production and limited demand as outlined below.

Green Asparagus

Green asparagus is by far the most popular variety in Australia. It derives its colour from the process of photosynthesis as the spear emerges from the soil into direct sunlight. Its delicious herbaceous flavour and distinctive shape add something special to dishes across the menu from soups and starters to main dishes, BBQs and salads. It can be enjoyed both raw and cooked.

Purple Asparagus

Purple asparagus is mildly fruit flavoured and tender-crisp. The purple colour is due to the same naturally occurring pigments that give blueberries their purple/blue colour. To retain its fascinating colour, purple asparagus is best eaten raw. When cooked using common cooking methods purple asparagus turns a bronze colour. If cooking, it's best added to dishes at the last minute before serving. Limited supplies of purple asparagus are usually available from mid October to mid December.

White Asparagus

White asparagus has long been considered a delicacy in Europe and has been grown in Australia in the past. However production of white asparagus is no longer commercially viable due to the high costs of production and limited demand. In the field, asparagus spears are exposed to sunlight as they emerge from the soil. The spears first turn pink and later, the familiar green colour. To produce white spears, asparagus needs to be grown in the dark. To do this large scale, growers have to temporarily erect black 'poly houses' or 'igloos' over the asparagus furrows, and dismantle them at the end of the season.

Spearheading Health with Asparagus

- Asparagus is low in kilojoules, without fat or cholesterol, while providing fibre. That makes it a must for any diet, including a weight loss diet.
- Asparagus provides the essential B group vitamins thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, B6 and biotin.
- Asparagus is a great source of folate. One serve provides over 20 percent of our daily needs. Folate is important for expectant mothers and for reducing heart disease risk.
- It's not only fruit that gives us vitamin C. A serve of asparagus provides about 25 percent of our daily needs of vitamin C.
- Asparagus has a brilliant range of bioactive compounds, such as antioxidants like rutin and beta-carotene. Research strongly suggests that the bioactive compounds in asparagus are keeping us healthy, well into old age.
- Asparagus has potassium to help keep our blood pressure healthy.

For further information

Please contact the Australian Asparagus Council at enquiries@asparagus.com.au

Preparing and cooking asparagus

- Simply snap off the woody ends with your forefinger and thumb. Alternatively, run a knife along the stalk until it meets less resistance, and then cut the end off at this point.
- Asparagus can be served both raw and cooked - try it fresh in salads and salsas.
- A host of delicious recipes can be found at asparagus.com.au.

Asparagus is versatile!

It's delicious cooked in many ways:

- Steam • Grill • BBQ • Stir-fry • Microwave
- Oven roast • Blanch • Boil • Pickle

Enjoy asparagus in:

- Soups • Salads • Omelette • Frittata
- Quiche • Tarts • Risotto • Pasta • Pizza
- Burgers • Wraps • Bruschetta • Fritters
- Sauces • Salsas • Toasted sandwiches
- Dips • Pesto

Team up asparagus with:

- Cheese • Eggs • Mushrooms
- Semi-dried tomatoes • Prosciutto
- Sesame Seeds • Hazelnuts • Walnuts
- Thyme • Tarragon • Cumin • Mustard
- Lemon • Lime • Garlic • Olive Oil – try lemon pressed • Mayonnaise • Paprika
- And much, much more!



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