

Farm to Health Series



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Asparagus has many nutrients. It contains large levels of vitamins K and A, folate, thiamin and iron. One-half cup provides:

- 35% daily value (DV) of vitamin K.
- 10% DV of vitamin A.
- 9% DV of folate.

It also contains the carotenoids beta-carotene, lutein and zeaxanthin, and several phenolic compounds. Saponins and inulin are also found in asparagus.

**Recipe on
Back!**

MAXIMIZE YOUR NUTRIENTS FROM: ASPARAGUS

HOW IT IMPROVES HEALTH

- Saponins and phenolics have anti-inflammatory benefits. Vitamin C and beta-carotene have antioxidant activity.
- Inulin is a type of dietary fiber and a prebiotic. It can lower plasma glucose and cholesterol, and help healthy bacteria in your colon to improve overall digestive health.
- The combination of compounds in asparagus may potentially protect against cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, and age-related cancers.

NUTRIENT AND PHYTONUTRIENT CHANGES

- Fresh asparagus has a shorter shelf-life than other vegetables. It should be consumed within 2 days of purchase to maximize nutrient intake.
- Steaming is the preferred method for cooking asparagus because vitamins A and K, folate, iron and carotenoids remain stable.
- If asparagus is blanched and frozen, vitamins A and K and carotenoids do not change but other nutrients will decline.
- Canned asparagus nutrient and phytonutrient losses can be minimized if the canning liquid is consumed.
- Fiber/inulin levels remain stable with cooking and processing.

Recipe: Asparagus and Scallion Soup w/ Almonds

(Reprinted with permission from the American Institute for Cancer Research, www.aicr.org)

To maximize nutritional value, this recipe uses fresh or frozen asparagus and does not involve draining the cooking liquid.

Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup sliced almonds, for garnish
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 medium leeks, white part only, thinly sliced
- 6 scallions, thinly sliced, 2 reserved for garnish
- 2 cans (14 oz. each) fat-free, reduced sodium chicken broth
- 1/2 tsp. dried thyme, to taste
- Salt and white pepper, to taste
- 1 1/2 lb. fresh or frozen asparagus, thinly sliced
- 1 can (15 oz.) white beans, rinsed and drained
- *1 cup evaporated skim milk (optional)

Directions:

- Place almonds in saucepan over medium heat. Toast nuts until golden, shaking pan occasionally to prevent burning, about 5-6 min. Transfer nuts to paper towel and set aside.
- In same pan, heat oil over medium heat. Add leeks and 4 chopped scallions. Cook, stirring occasionally, until tender, about 5-6 min. Add broth, thyme, salt and pepper, and bring to boil. Add asparagus and beans.
- Bring back to boil, then immediately reduce heat and simmer, partially covered, until vegetables are soft, 12-15 min. Remove from heat and cool slightly.
- Purée soup in blender. Pour back into saucepan over medium heat. Heat through. Ladle into serving bowls. Garnish with toasted almonds and remaining scallions.
- *For a creamier soup, stir in 1 cup evaporated skim milk after puréeing and pouring back into saucepan. Heat before ladling into serving bowls.

6 servings. Per Serving:

146 calories, 3 g total fat (<1 g saturated fat), 24 g carbohydrate, 9 g protein, 5 g dietary fiber, 304 mg sodium, 13 mg vitamin C (22% DV), 283 µg vitamin K (350%), 1669 IU vitamin A (33% DV), 129 µg folate (32%), 0.3 mg thiamin (20%), 4.4 mg iron (24%)



OTHER FOOD SOURCES OF KEY NUTRIENTS AND PHYTONUTRIENTS:

Vitamin K

Dark leafy greens
Broccoli

Lutein &
zeaxanthin

Egg yolk
Corn

For more information or how to maximize nutrients in other fruits and vegetables, see <http://localfoods.osu.edu/maximizenutrients>.

