



Asparagus gratinee

One bunch of asparagus (allow 5-6 large spears per person - more if spears are thin)
 2-3 handfuls of nutritional yeast flakes (available from health food shops)
 Extra virgin olive oil
 Salt and ground black pepper

- 1 Cut away any hard parts from the bottom of spears
- 2 Steam (preferably) or boil in water until cooked but still firm (about 10 mins)

Fresh and fruity

Spring has sprung and its time to indulge in the wonderful array of fruits and vegetables that will be at their best over the coming weeks - avocados, asparagus and fresh, ripe berries amongst them.

Avocados are a highly-nutritious fruit which grow on trees, originally in Mexico and Central America but now worldwide. They contain no cholesterol and although they do have a high fat content, it's monounsaturated fat which helps reduce 'bad' cholesterol (LDL) and the risk of heart disease by increasing good cholesterol (HDL).

They are a great source of fibre, vitamin A, which aids in bone and teeth development, growth and tissue repair, vitamin C, which boosts immunity, B vitamins thiamine and riboflavin, which improve the rate at which the body burns off energy, and vitamin E, which helps maintain healthy skin. Vitamins A, C and E are antioxidants that help to fight disease by destroying unstable molecules called free radicals, which damage body cells. Avocados are also rich in the minerals potassium, folate and magnesium.

Collectively, the vitamins and minerals in avocados keep the body's reproductive system and libido healthy. Which is probably why the Spanish originally called them 'ahuacatl', meaning 'testicle', partly because of their shape but also because of their aphrodisiac properties.

Asparagus is especially tasty and nutritious - a delicious treat eaten, steamed, roast or stirfried. It is low in calories and sodium, high in B vitamins, iron, phosphorous and vitamin K.

Spring berries are delicious in puddings and packed with disease fighting antioxidants. They are especially rich in vitamin C.



Pasta with Asparagus, Sun dried Tomatoes and Pesto

Serves 3-4

1 bunch fresh asparagus
 450g chopped into 3cm pieces (you can use a can of asparagus if fresh is not available)
 250g fusilli spirals or other pasta such as penne
 a jar of sun dried tomatoes (approx. 14), drained from the oil and chopped into bite-sized pieces

8 large garlic cloves, finely chopped (crushing them doesn't work too well as when they're fried they stick together in a lump)
 4 tbs extra virgin olive oil - or more to taste
 200g jar vegan pesto such as Zip or Motherhemp - add more to taste
 handful of fresh, chopped coriander

- 1 Add asparagus to a pan of salted, boiling water together with the pasta. When pasta is cooked, drain and keep warm
- 2 Heat the sun dried tomatoes and add to the pasta together with pesto and coriander and stir together
- 3 In a small saucepan, heat the olive oil, add chopped garlic and fry gently until lightly browned
- 4 Add oil and garlic to pasta and stir in
- 5 Add salt, ground black pepper and more olive oil if liked

- 3 Spread tinfoil over the bottom of a grill pan and place spears on it, side by side
- 4 Sprinkle 2-3 handfuls of nutritional yeast flakes over
- 5 Drizzle generous amount of olive oil on top
- 6 Grill on full until gratinee is golden (takes approx. 2-3mins) and transfer to individual serving plates, scraping any residue from the tinfoil (add more olive oil if preferred)
- 7 Serve with nice bread as a first course or with new potatoes and salad



Mustard Vinaigrette

Serves 4

175ml extra virgin olive oil
50ml white wine or cider vinegar
1 tsp salt

2 tsp sugar
Masses of black pepper
2 dsp prepared French mustard

- 1 Mix ingredients in a jar with lid and shake until well combined or place in a bowl and whisk. There will be plenty left over for use another day

Avocado and smoked tofu

2 large, ripe avocados
1 packet smoked tofu (available from most health food stores)
2 dsp sesame seeds

Salt and black pepper
To serve:
Mustard vinaigrette (see left)

- 1 In a saucepan, dry roast the sesame seeds over a low heat until starting to brown. Allow to cool
- 2 Divide avocados into half lengthways, remove stone and skin. Place each half on an individual serving plate and make 6 or 7 cuts across, cutting all the way down to the plate
- 3 Cut the smoked tofu into thin slices slightly wider than the avocado and insert into the cuts
- 4 Season with salt and pepper and pour mustard vinaigrette over and round
- 5 Sprinkle the roasted seeds liberally over the avocado and tofu

Summer Pudding

450g mixed summer fruits (for example blackcurrants, raspberries, strawberries, blackberries, redcurrants*)

Sugar
White bread

- 1 Stew the fruit for five minutes or more with a little water and enough sugar to suit your taste. Do not overcook so the fruit becomes mushy
- 2 When cooked, drain and reserve the liquid
- 3 Lightly dip the slices of bread, crusts removed, in the liquid and line the basin
- 4 Pour in the fruit and add enough liquid to soak the bread. Cover the top with bread and soak with liquid
- 5 Place a saucer on top and weight down
- 6 Place in the fridge for 24 hours
- 7 Remove from basin and serve. Hand any remaining liquid separately

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* Or use frozen berries. Instead of instruction 1 defrost them in 100ml of water over a low heat with the sugar for less than 5 mins

