

Have You Heard?

By Doris Thomas
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Home Economist



Savor Succulent Asparagus
Don't miss one of your super-market's earliest signs of spring — fresh California asparagus. This tender plant is ideal for those concerned with nutrition and diet. It is low in calories, very low in sodium, a good source of potassium and a source of fiber. It's digestive taste will revive even the most mundane menu.

The superior flavor, texture and nutritional content of fresh asparagus can only be maintained by careful handling at every stage on its way to market. The growers, packers and shippers do their best to assure optimum quality on delivery.

Asparagus must be stored at a constant temperature of 37 to 41 degrees F. with at least 95%

humidity to prevent shrinkage, weight loss and decay.

When buying fresh asparagus, look for smooth, round spears with closed tips. For tenderness and flavor, choose spears that are at least one-half inch in diameter. Avoid those with large, woody, hard, white bases. Fresh spears snap right away, aging spears bend. And avoid sandy asparagus because the sand is difficult to remove.

To store asparagus, trim one-fourth inch from the spear. Wrap them in damp paper towels and place in a plastic bag. Keep them in your vegetable crisper and use within three days. Wash them with cold water to refresh them before cooking.

Although asparagus is often

associated with fancy restaurants, you do not need to be a highly-skilled chef to prepare asparagus in your own kitchen. As a rule of thumb, prepare one-half pound (six to eight spears) per person.

To prepare on the top of the stove, place asparagus upright in a deep pan of boiling water so that the stems are boiled and the tips are steamed. Boil six to eight minutes or until tender — but still crunchy. Lift the asparagus gently out of the pan with tongs and place on a serving dish.

To prepare in the microwave, bend the spear until the tough end snaps off, cut away scales with sharp knife. Wash in cold water. Measure ¼ cup water into a 12x8-inch Pyrex dish. Place spears in dish with buds toward center. Cover with plastic wrap. Microwave 1 lb. of spears for 3½ minutes on high power. Remove and rearrange spears from outside to middle of dish, keeping buds in center of dish. Cover with plastic wrap and microwave for another 3½ minutes. It is best to buy spears of uniform size so they will microwave evenly.

Use asparagus to spice up vegetable and pasta salads, grain dishes and stirfrys. It is especially pretty on a bed of fresh salad greens with red pepper garnish and non-fat vinaigrette dressing.

4-H Auction Features Gems

A new feature will be available to bidders at the annual 4-H Auction scheduled March 19, at 5 P.M. at the York Co. 4-H Center.

A selection of semiprecious gems will be sold in a silent auction. The 35 genuine gems will be

on display at 6:30 p.m. and the silent auction be in progress from 7 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

Every gem has accompanying documentation attesting its genuineness, the exact carat weight, and approximate insurance replacement value. The selection includes genuine, opaque rubies, sapphires, opals, garnets, and topaz.

Values range between \$50 and \$200. Each gem is finely cut, faceted, polished, and ready for immediate setting or safekeeping.

In the silent auction, written bids are placed on the bid sheet attached to each gem. Bids must increase in \$10 increments and each stone has a minimum bid. The maximum bid is the owner.

Questions concerning the gems or the auction should be directed to the York Co. 4-H Club office at (717) 757-9657 between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

Food stand, bake table, craft, and book table are also available to the public. Personal checks are accepted with proper identification.

All proceeds from the 4-H auction will be used to maintain and improve the 4-H Center facility.

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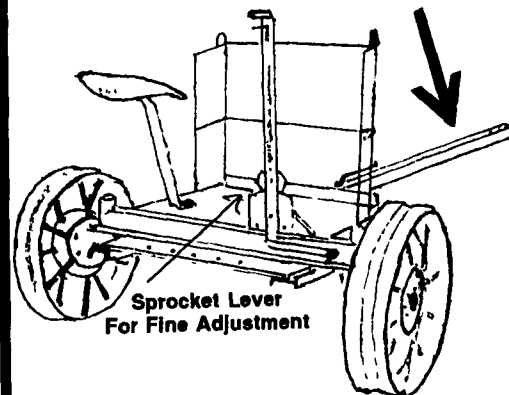
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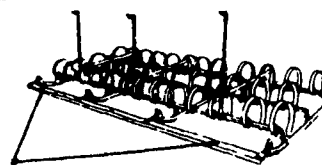
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