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Treat Yourself to an
Around the Table
Chef's Apron

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More information the web at
www.susannye.com

Memorial Day has come and gone. June brings sunny days and warm nights. Lilacs, lupine and iris bloom. Beautiful brides put jitters aside and walk gracefully down the aisle. Students dread, cram and cram some more for final exams and then celebrate joyous graduations.



And cooks, we're doing our own little happy dance. Fresh, local asparagus is in the market.

In case you are wondering what to do with early summer's bounty ...

1. Wrap it in up. Roll up whole spears in sheets of buttery phyllo. Add a sprinkle of parmesan and you've got a wonderfully simple appetizer.
2. Steam it until it is tender-crisp. Whatever you do, don't overcook. No one but no one likes soggy grey asparagus. Finish the bright green stalks with a drizzle of lemon butter. If you want to get a little fancy, dress it up with hollandaise.
3. Roast it. Before you slide it in the oven lightly coat with walnut oil and white wine vinegar and sprinkle with chopped walnuts.
4. Grill it on high heat after a light toss in extra virgin olive oil. Hot off the grill, add a squirt of lemon and serve.
5. Put it in the blender and turn it into a smooth and creamy soup. Serve hot or cold.
6. Throw it in a salad. Raw, steamed, roasted or grilled, asparagus is a great addition to a summer salad. Try it with dandelion greens or a colorful mesclun mix. Top it off with a sprinkle of toasted walnuts or crumbled gorgonzola or both!
7. Toss it with pasta. A little extra virgin olive oil, finely chopped shallot, a touch of garlic and a squeeze of lemon turn asparagus and pasta into a heavenly feast. Sprinkle with grated lemon peel, chopped parsley and crumbled feta. Dinner is served.
8. Stir it into risotto. Who doesn't love risotto? Add chopped asparagus about five maybe ten minutes before the risotto is al dente. A definite winner!
9. Stir fry it. Start with a little garlic, a little ginger and a touch of spicy hot pepper flakes. Add the asparagus and toss until it's tender-crisp. Top it off with a splash of soy sauce and lime juice.
10. Bake it in a tart. Combine asparagus, tangy goat cheese and creamy custard in a flakey pastry shell and bake to golden perfection.

For big celebrations, simple family suppers or romantic picnics, June is the month for lots and lots of asparagus.

Bon appétit!

Susan

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or just look like one!

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Asparagus & Goat Cheese Tart

This versatile dish is great for brunch, lunch or a light supper. Enjoy!

Serves 6-8

Savory Flakey Pastry (recipe follows)

Olive oil

About 12 ounces asparagus, trimmed, cut into 1/4 to 1/2-inch pieces

1 small shallot, finely chopped

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

1 tablespoon all purpose flour

4 ounces goat cheese, crumbled

2 ounces parmesan cheese, grated

4 large eggs

3/4 cup milk

3/4 cup half & half

1 teaspoon Dijon

Pinch nutmeg

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees and arrange the rack in the middle of the oven.

Roll out the pastry dough on a lightly floured surface. Line a 9-10 inch pie or tart pan with the pastry leaving about 1/4-inch for shrinkage; crimp the edges. Store in the refrigerator until ready to use.

Heat a little olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the asparagus and shallot and season with salt and pepper. Sauté for 2 minutes. Cool the veggies, sprinkle with flour and toss to coat. Put the vegetables in the pie shell. Sprinkle with the cheeses.

Whisk the eggs, milk, mustard, nutmeg, salt and pepper together in a large bowl. Pour the egg mixture into the pie shell, adding just enough to come within 1/4-inch of the top of the shell.

Transfer the tart to the oven. Cook for 5 minutes and lower the oven temperature to 375 degrees. Bake in the oven for 30 to 40 minutes, or until the custard is set and quiche is golden brown. Allow to cool for 5-10 minutes before serving.

Savory Flakey Pastry

1 cup all purpose flour

1/2 teaspoon salt

4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) chilled butter, cut into small pieces

3 tablespoons solid vegetable shortening, cold, cut into small pieces

2-4 tablespoons ice water

Blend flour and salt in a food processor. Add the butter and shortening; process until the mixture resembles coarse meal.

Sprinkle with ice water, 1-2 tablespoons at a time and process until the dough comes together in a ball. Remove the dough from the food processor and flatten into a disk. Wrap the dough in plastic; chill until firm, at least 30 minutes.

