

Asparagus

• Selecting Asparagus

- **To Can:** Use tender, tight-tipped spears. They should be about 4-6 inches tall.
- **To Freeze:** Use young, tender spears.
- **To Dry:** Use tender, tight-tipped spears. Should be of ideal condition for eating

Health Benefits

There are only 4 calories per medium spear. Asparagus is a good source of potassium and vitamin C and provides 2 to 3 grams of dietary fiber per serving. It contains more folic acid than any other vegetable. One 1/2 cup serving provides more than half of the recommended daily allowance.

Water Blanching

Blanching is a technique used to preserve the color, and texture of a vegetable before it is frozen. It also helps to kill the insects and bacteria on the surface of the vegetable and slows the loss of vitamins. Timing is very important. Underblanching increases enzyme activity and overblanching causes loss of flavor, color, vitamins and minerals.

How to Blanch:

1. You will need a pot with a blanching basket and a lid or you can fit a wire basket or colander into a large pot with a lid. Fill the pot with water (1 gallon per pound of vegetable).
2. Bring the water to a boil.
3. Put the vegetable into the basket and lower it into the boiling water. Put the lid on the pot. Return the water to a vigorous boil and begin timing. Blanch as directed in the directions for the vegetable you are freezing.
4. Remove vegetables when ready, and immediately submerge in ice water to stop the cooking process.

Things you should know about packaging for freezing:

Packaging should:

- Be moisture vapor resistant
- Be durable and leak proof
- Not become brittle and crack at low temperatures
- Resist oil, grease and water
- Protect food from absorption of other odors and flavors
- Be easy to mark and seal

Rigid Containers:

These include hard plastic and glass. They are usually good for liquid packs. Rigid containers are often reusable and are easy to store in the freezer. Choose glass jars made for canning or freezing. If the glass jar has a narrow mouth, be sure to leave a little extra headspace for the expansion of foods when frozen. Lids should fit tightly. If they do not, seal with freezer tape.

Flexible Bags or Wrappings:

These types include flexible freezer bags, freezer paper, and heavy-weight aluminum foil. These are typically used for food with little or no liquids. Bags are available in a variety of sizes and come with different seals such as zippers or ties. Regardless of the type, when sealing press to remove as much excess air as possible.

How to Freeze Asparagus



1. Select young, tender spears.
2. Wash thoroughly and sort into sizes.
3. Trim the stalks. Cut all the spears into even sizes that will fit in the container.
4. Water blanch small spears for 2 minutes, medium for 3 minutes, and larger spears for 4 minutes.
5. Cool pieces immediately in an ice bath, drain, and package. You do not need to leave headspace.

Things you should know about canning vegetables:

General Information:

- Carefully select and wash the food you are going to can.
- Usually fresh foods should be peeled.
- Use jars made specifically for home canning and two-piece lids.
- Process jar in pressure canner for the correct period of time. Correct for altitude if required.

Doing this maintains quality, nutrition and helps keep food from spoiling or causing foodborne illness.

Adjusting for altitude:

- The higher the altitude, the lower the temperature in the canner. That can result in under-processing and higher risk of spoilage and foodborne illness.
- If you can food at an altitude over 1000 feet you need to adjust for altitude.
- Find the altitude for your county seat by checking a State of Oklahoma map.
- Be sure to include the altitude information when determining processing times.

Recommended Canning Jars:

- Regular, and wide mouth Mason type jars with tight sealing lids are ideal. These come in a variety of sizes.
- Before using, clean jars with hot water and soap and rinse well. To sterilize, put jar right side up on the rack in boiling-water canner. Fill jar with hot water to one inch below top of jar, and boil for 10 minutes at altitudes of 1,000 ft. If above 1,000 ft boil 1 extra minute for each additional 1,000 ft.
- Seal lids tight. Once sealed, do not try to re-tighten the lids. As the contents in the jars cool, this will suction the lid to the jar.

How to Can Asparagus Spears or Pieces

Quantity: You will need an average of 24-1/2 pounds of asparagus per canner load of 7 quarts, or an average of 16 pounds per canner load of 9 pints

Quality: Select tender, tight-tipped spears that are about 4-6 inches tall.

To Can:

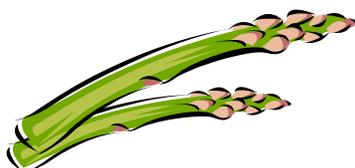
1. Wash the spears, remove scales and snap off woody end of stems. Wash again after trimming.
2. Cut into 1-inch spears or can them whole.
 - **Hot Pack:** Cover spears with boiling water and boil 2-3 minutes. Fill jars loosely with hot asparagus, leaving 1 inch headspace.
 - **Raw Pack:** Fill jars with raw asparagus, packing as tightly as possible without crushing, leaving 1-inch headspace.
3. Add 1 teaspoon of canning salt per quart to the jars, if desired. Add boiling water to each jar, leaving 1-inch headspace. See tables below for proper process times, and altitude pressures.

Recommended process time for asparagus in a dial-gauge pressure canner

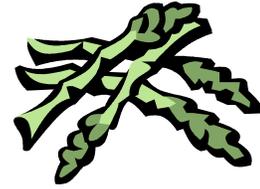
			Canner Pressure (PSI) at Altitudes of:			
Style of Pack	Size of Jar	Process Time	0-2,000 ft	2,001-4,000 ft	4,001-6,000ft	6,001-8,000ft
Hot and Raw	Pints	30 min	11 lb	12 lb	13 lb	14 lb
	Quarts	40 min	11	12	13	14

Recommended process time for asparagus in a weighted-gauge

			Canner Pressure (PSI) at Altitudes of:	
Style of Pack	Size of Jar	Process Time	0-1,000 ft	Above 1,000 ft
Hot and raw	Pints	30 min	10 lb	15 lb
	Quarts	40 min	10	15



How to Dry Asparagus



Drying is not the best method for preserving asparagus but can yield a fair product.

Select asparagus at peak flavor and eating quality. Ten pounds of fresh asparagus will yield 3/4 pound or 5 pints dried. Before drying, blanch asparagus in boiling water to kill bacteria and enhance quality and safety of the end product. Drying methods include:

- **Dehydrator Drying:** thermostatically electric dehydrators are recommended. These work by blowing warm air over the food until they are dried out. These should be used in a well-ventilated room.
- **Oven Drying:** Either gas or electric ovens can be used, if the oven can be set at 140°F. If not, the food will cook instead of dry. Preheat oven to 140°F. Maintain that temperature throughout the duration of the drying process, using an oven thermometer placed near the food to do so. For air circulation, leave the oven door propped open two to six inches. A fan outside the oven near the door will improve circulation. When drying is nearly complete, turn off heat and open the door wide for an additional hour or so to allow excess moisture to escape. Drying times in a conventional oven could be up to twice as long as those in a dehydrator.

To Dry Asparagus: Wash the spears thoroughly, snap off the woody part of the stem, halve the large tips. Water blanch 3-1/2 to 4-1/2 minutes. Immediately dip briefly in ice water until they feel only slightly hot. Pour blanched asparagus directly onto drying racks held over a sink. Wipe excess water from underneath the tray and arrange asparagus in a single layer. Place directly into dehydrator or oven Dry 4 to 6 hours in a dehydrator. Watch closely for dryness after 4 hours. Dryness Test—spears should be crisp to brittle when completely dried.

For more information about food preservation contact your local County Cooperative Extension office. To locate contact information for your county visit <http://www.oces.okstate.edu/> and select County Office Directory on the left side. You can also visit the National Center for Home Food Preservation at www.uga.edu/nchfp/

Adapted for Oklahoma by Barbara Brown, Food Specialist for the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service and Claire Grady, graduate research assistant.

Source: National Center for Home Preservation, www.uga.edu/nchfp/

2011



Oklahoma State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, State and Local Governments cooperating. Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age or disability and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.