



Asparagus “Anti Pasti” - Vegetarian

Fritters, burnt fennel & honey yoghurt
Tartare, paneer, spice & herbs
Gazpacho, basil, spice & olive oil

Preparing the asparagus for the 3 dishes

36 spears fresh green asparagus, good thick spears approx. 750g to 1kg

Snap off the woody part of the stalks, discard. Shave each spear with a vegetable peeler. Cut each spear into two, ‘tips’ and ‘stems’. ‘Tips’ about one third length and ‘stems’ two thirds the length. Next, blanch the asparagus tips for 30 seconds, refresh in iced water, then when completely cooled allow to dry on kitchen towel. Blanch the stems until just cooked, about 4 to 5 minutes, refresh in iced water and when completely cooled allow to dry on kitchen towel.

Asparagus fritters

burnt fennel & honey yoghurt

Serves 4 as part of the Anti Pasti platter

Ingredients

24 of the blanched asparagus ‘tips’ (see above), carefully sliced in half lengthways

Batter Ingredients

50g gram flour

50ml water

1 tsp sunflower oil

Spices: ½ tsp powdered turmeric and 1 tsp coriander fruits, crushed

Small handful chopped mint leaf

Juice and zest of ½ lime

Pinch of sea salt and little extra

Dressing

50ml full fat, plain yoghurt

Juice ½ lemon

Good squeeze of runny honey, about 1 tblsp

½ tsp whole fennel fruits, dry toasted until they smoke and turn from green to a brown colour, then pour onto a small plate and allow to cool completely

Small handful chopped mint leaf

Method

1. Mix the batter ingredients to a lightly whipped cream consistency, then pop into a fridge for 20 minutes
2. In another small bowl, mix together all the dressing ingredients except the fennel and set aside in the fridge
3. Heat some sunflower oil in a deep fat fryer to 190°C
4. Remove the batter from the fridge, gently coat the delicate tip halves in the batter
5. Using a fork, pop them into the oil one at a time to fry until they turn a light brown colour, about 60 seconds
6. Remove from the oil, immediately season with a little sea salt and rest on doubled-up kitchen paper
7. Pile attractively onto a warm platter, add the burnt fennel to the dressing, mix then drizzle lightly over the fritters and serve immediately.

Asparagus tartare

paneer, spices & herbs

Serves 4 as part of the Anti Pasti platter

Ingredients

12 of the blanched asparagus tips and 12 blanched stems

2 free range Clarence Court quail egg yolks or ½ medium organic hen egg yolk

50g thick soured cream, or good crème fraîche

juice of ½ lime

1 banana shallot, peeled, finely diced, rinsed in cold water and patted dry

25g paneer, finely diced

1 fresh red finger chilli, finely diced

Spices: ½ tsp whole carom fruits and the seeds from ½ black cardamom pod and 2 green cardamom pods finely ground

2 tsp finely chopped chives and dill

Sea salt to taste

Method

1. Slice the asparagus into fine dice reserving 2 of the tips. Cut them in half for garnish. Set aside
2. Take a shallow bowl, add the yolks, cream, lime juice and mix them together briskly with a fork
3. Add the asparagus, the shallot, the paneer and chilli dice, the spices, the herbs and a light touch of salt, then gently but firmly fold in the vegetables until really well combined. Check the seasoning
4. Arrange with two large spoons attractively on a plate with the tip garnish and serve straight away.

Asparagus Gazpacho

basil, spice & olive oil

Ingredients

24 blanched asparagus stems (all the remaining stems left)

1 medium sized garlic clove, peeled

3 leaves of green basil

½ ripe Hass avocado, peeled, stoned and roughly chopped

50ml full fat coconut milk

300g of ice cubes

15g fresh ginger

Juice of 1 lime

Small dot of Wasabi, about 3g (optional, but definitely worth it)

1 tsp sea salt

Spices: ½tsp black pepper and ½tsp fennel fruits, freshly ground

Soft fruity virgin olive oil to garnish

Method

1. Pop everything into a blender and blitz to a smooth texture. Best is to then pass through a fine sieve.
2. Pour into frozen old fashioned glasses, drizzle with a little olive oil serve immediately.