

*Churston Traditional*

# **FARM SHOP**

*Where you'll find the West Country's finest food and drink...*

## CHURSTON FARM SHOP RECIPES MAY 2017

English asparagus is the finest you can buy, we are happy to state. And that's the case for a number of reasons. Firstly, you buy it when it's perfectly fresh. It hasn't been trucked up from Spain or, even worse, flown thousands of miles from South America, where much supermarket asparagus comes from.

That naturally improves the flavour. But another thing which does that is the fact that our asparagus is grown at the very edge of its range of climatic tolerance. It has to work very hard to survive at all and that has a really marked effect on its eating quality.

There's a further bonus this year in that the dry spring has also helped concentrate flavour in the asparagus spears. As a rule the plant doesn't mind cold weather as long as it's dry. But rain chills the roots and slows the production of spears.

Asparagus, actually a member of the lily family, occupies a very special place among traditional English foods partly because its season is so short, partly because its taste is so extraordinary. Its other quality is the fact that it freezes so well: drop it in boiling water for a minute then plunge it straight into cold water to halt the cooking process and it will then sit happily in the freezer until the next cutting season rolls round.

Here are a couple of ideas for using this star English vegetable.

### CHICKEN AND ASPARAGUS TERRINE

Ingredients for eight. 700g skinless chicken breast, 500g asparagus, 300ml crème fraiche, 30g softened butter, one egg, two generous pinches of nutmeg, sea salt, freshly-ground black pepper.

Method. Prepare a large bowl of cold water with some ice cubes in. Using a vegetable peeler trim away the outer layer and side shoots on the spears, place in a dish with a little water, cover with film, microwave on full power for four minutes then transfer to the iced water to preserve the bright green colour. Butter a terrine dish or two-pound loaf tin and trim the drained and dried spears so that two will fit in, end to end. Cut the chicken into chunks and whizz in a food processor with the nutmeg to form a smooth paste. Add the crème fraiche, butter and egg and plenty of salt and pepper and whizz again for a minute. Place a layer of the paste along the bottom of the terrine mould or loaf in and top with a layer of asparagus. Add more paste, pressing down with a wooden spatula to ensure an even spread, then more asparagus and continue until the dish is full. Heat the oven to 180C gas mark 4, cover the dish tightly with foil, place in a roasting pan, add enough boiling water to come halfway up the side and bake for 45 minutes. Allow to cool completely then refrigerate overnight before turning out and slicing.

### ASPARAGUS AND SMOKED BACON SOUP

Ingredients. 750g asparagus, tablespoon finely-chopped shallot, 50g butter, 1.5 litre warm chicken stock, six rashers smoked bacon, sea salt freshly-ground black pepper.

Method. Roughly chop the asparagus, melt the butter in a large pan and sweat the shallot until translucent. Add the chopped asparagus, turn well to coat and cook gently for 10 minutes. Add the stock, cover and simmer gently for 20 minutes, allow to cool slightly then liquidise with a hand-held blender. Pass through a fine sieve to remove any coarse fibres and season well. Grill the bacon until crisp and browned and once cool whizz to crumbs in a food processor or place in a polythene bag and crush with a rolling pin. Sprinkle a little of the bacon over each helping of soup just before serving.

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