

# Wild Asparagus with Hollandaise Sauce

By Tom Dickson | Preparation time: 5 minutes | Cooking time: 15 minutes | Serves 2-3



*This easy recipe is adapted from one on the Food Network Kitchen website.*

## INGREDIENTS

1 lb. asparagus, woody ends trimmed  
1 T. olive oil  
¼ t. salt  
Freshly ground black pepper

## HOLLANDAISE SAUCE

1 large pasteurized egg yolk  
1½ t. freshly squeezed lemon juice  
Pinch cayenne pepper  
4 T. unsalted butter  
½ t. salt

## DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 450 degrees F.

Spread the spears in a single layer in a shallow roasting pan or baking sheet, drizzle with olive oil, sprinkle with salt, and roll to coat thoroughly. Roast about 10 minutes, until lightly browned and tender. Flip the spears with a spatula after about 5 minutes.

While the spears roast, put the egg yolk, lemon juice, and cayenne in a blender. Pulse a few times to combine.

Put the butter in a small microwave-safe bowl and heat in a microwave until just melted. With the blender running, gradually add the melted butter into the egg mixture to make a smooth, frothy sauce. If the sauce gets too thick and gloppy, blend in a teaspoon of lukewarm water. Season with salt and serve immediately, or keep warm in a small heat-safe bowl set over hot (but not simmering, because that will cook the egg in the sauce) water until ready to serve.

Spread the roasted asparagus on a serving platter. Grind a generous amount of pepper over the top. Top with hollandaise sauce. ■

**W**ild asparagus isn't a truly wild edible plant like watercress or camas root. It's actually the feral sproutings of plants cultivated in gardens decades ago. The seeds of those original plants spread, and now these yummy vegetables grow across much of Montana.

I'd searched the Helena Valley in vain for years before a colleague told me what to look for: Scan road ditches (public rights of way) for the 3- to 6-foot dead stalks of last year's plants. Asparagus favors slight slopes with some but not too much moisture. That's why ditches can be so productive. Streambanks are another good place to find the plants.

You can also scout for mature plants in midsummer when they resemble wispy Christmas trees with red berries (seed pods), or search for dead ones in fall when they turn yellow-tan. Mark the spots for spring gathering, which begins after several weeks of air temperatures in the high 60s and soil temperatures reaching 50 degrees. That's usually around the end of April and lasts until about Memorial Day.

Look at the base of old plants for young spears, which look exactly like the asparagus you see in a grocery store. Snap them off at the base, leaving at least one spear to mature into a flower stalk whose roots will spring up into next year's crop.

To find out if asparagus grows near you, ask around. Be aware that people can be as secretive and possessive of their asparagus harvesting spots as they are about morelling sites or fishing holes.

Many people eat wild asparagus raw, but it can also be steamed, grilled, baked, or boiled. This recipe, especially with toasted English muffins and slices of Canadian bacon, makes a perfect Mother's Day brunch.

—Tom Dickson is editor of Montana Outdoors



Spring



Summer



Fall