



Notes from the Field by Craig East of Sunrise Farm

Weather Report

As I write this, I'm looking out the window at gray skies and drops of rain. The weatherman says that Maryland is eight inches of rain below normal. I have already had over nine inches since the first of April. I know, I know, Somerset Co. isn't really a part of Maryland.

I've lost some of the crops I've planted because of too much water, and I've had to delay planting others. That, my friends, is farming, and as Forrest Gump might say, "Farming is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you'll get." Each year is different with new surprises, but one thing I can always count on is my asparagus coming up. Rain or shine, about the middle of April, it comes back every year like an old trusted friend.

Asparagus is a perennial plant, and once established will last for years. In fact, I once had a field of it that was over 30 years old and still going strong. Maybe more important than its longevity is the fact that it is a very healthy food. It's low in calories, four spears (60 grams) contains only ten calories, with two grams of carbohydrates and one gram of protein. Also asparagus is a good source of thiamin, vitamin A, and riboflavin.

I'm not sure just where asparagus came from. Both the Greeks and Romans grew it. Syria and Egypt grew it and it was pictured in ancient reliefs. Spain is another country that has grown it since ancient times. It came to the United States in the sixteenth century via France and England. No matter where it came from it is one of my favorite vegetables and I'm glad it's here

Here at Sunrise Farm we have a little over three acres of asparagus planted. This keeps us very busy in the spring. Usually from mid-April to mid-June. It has to be cut every day or it will start to fern out and stop sending up new shoots. It grows really fast. When we have both warm days and warm

nights it could easily be cut twice a day. Cutting can be hard work, it's like doing touch-your-toes for five or six hours.

There is no way that I could do it all by myself. If it wasn't for Kelly, who has taken off from work on her farm to help me, and her friend, Dominique, who now helps with all kinds of things on the farm. I sent her home today so muddy that I am ashamed of myself. Also my very good friend, Ed, who not only helps with the asparagus, but everything else under the sun or rain.

By now you should have gotten your first shares if you signed up for full season. I hope that you are enjoying it.

See you at Asbury,
Craig

Newsletter Items Requested

If you have information, suggestions, questions, or announcements of general interest to the CSA members, please send them to sheltonlankford@me.com.

The newsletter is produced each Sunday during the growing season. Shelton and Verna Lankford are the editors, and the CSA farmers and officers provide the Notes from the Field articles. If you have requests or suggestions, we would like to hear from you.

The newsletter is distributed on paper at the pickup locations. Reproduction is contributed by BEACON, at Salisbury University. Last week's newsletter encountered a mixup in communication, for which I apologize. If you failed to get your copy, let me know, and I will see that you get a copy..

Verna and I will normally be at the Asbury distribution point on Tuesdays. I will be asking members if they would like to receive the newsletter by email. We produce a .pdf (portable document file) version that can be read by Adobe Acrobat reader, a free utility you can download from Adobe.com for any computer, or by "Preview" on the Macintosh. It might save a tree - you never know.

Shelton F. Lankford, Editor

In Your Share This Week

Asparagus
Lettuce
Spinach
Carrots
Bok Choy
Salad Turnips -or- Radishes



Note: For preservation tips and additional recipes, visit the CSA website at <http://www.providentorganicfarm.com/>

Snapping vs. Cutting Asparagus

Did you know that snapping off the bottom Asparagus of each individual stalk is better than cutting? When snapping, asparagus tends to break naturally where the woody portion of the spear ends and the tender parts begin. This is usually where the color changes from white to green.

5-Minute “Healthy Sautéed” Asparagus (World’s Healthiest Foods by George Mateljan) Serves 2

“Healthy Sauté” allows you to enjoy all of the great taste and health-promoting nutrients of Asparagus while the easy Mediterranean dressing enhances its delicate flavor.

1 lb of Asparagus
3 TBS low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth

Mediterranean Dressing:
3 TBS extra virgin olive oil
2 medium cloves garlic
2 tsp lemon juice
Sea salt and pepper to taste

1. Chop or press garlic and let it sit for at least 5 minutes.
2. Heat 3 TBS broth over medium heat in a skillet.
3. While broth is heating, snap off the woody bottom of asparagus stems, then cut the spears into 2-inch lengths. Cutting them into short pieces of equal length ensures quick, even cooking.
4. When broth begins to steam, add asparagus. **Cover** and cook for 5 minutes. The outside will be tender, and the inside will be crisp. Thinner spears will take about 3 minutes. “Healthy Sauté” will concentrate both the flavor and nutrition of asparagus.
5. Transfer to a bowl. For more flavor, toss asparagus with the remaining ingredients while it is still hot. (Mediterranean Dressing does not need to be made separately.) Research shows that carotenoids found in foods are best absorbed when consumed with oils.

OPTIONAL: To mellow the flavor of garlic, add garlic to asparagus for the last 2 minutes of cooking.

NOTE: To prevent overcooking, use a timer. Testing with a fork is not an effective way to determine whether it’s done.

Flavor Tips: Try these serving suggestions with the recipe above.

Film Showing at Asbury

Sunday, 17 May, 4:00 PM, Rm 103

“The Real Dirt on Farmer John”

This unique film shows John Peterson’s evolution from a traditional Midwestern farmer to an organic farmer who fills a growing demand for locally grown food.

After the film, Jay Martin will speak about his own journey to farming and sustain-able agriculture on the lower shore.

1. **Asparagus with Dijon Caper Sauce.** In a small bowl, combine the Mediterranean dressing recipe above with 1 TBS Dijon mustard, 1 tsp capers and 2 tsp minced fresh basil or parsley. Pour over hot asparagus.
2. Top with grated sharp cheese such as parmesan or romano, fresh minced basil, parsley or oregano and lemon zest.
3. Add a few drops of tamari (soy sauce) to mellow the flavor of asparagus.
4. **Asparagus with Seafood.** Combine 5-Minute sautéed asparagus with shrimp or fish, quartered cherry tomatoes, onions, and mushrooms. Increase the Mediterranean dressing as needed. Garnish with chopped parsley or cilantro.
5. **Cold Asparagus Salad.** Refrigerate the 5-Minute sautéed asparagus. Add other vegetables, such as roasted red peppers, and toss with your favorite vinaigrette and a small amount of pressed garlic.