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Pasta with smoked salmon & asparagus

Thu, 04/19/2007 - 13:53 -- Roger Doiron

Introduction:

This recipe is also delicious with peas instead of asparagus. It begs for a glass of wine to cut the creaminess, though asparagus makes wine pairing tough. The San Francisco Chronicle's wine folks suggest a Chardonnay or Pinot Gris.

Preparation:

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Blanch the asparagus until still slightly fibrous but mostly cooked, about 3 minutes for thin asparagus. Remove with tongs or a spider (large mesh scoop) and place in a colander to cool. Immediately add the pasta to the boiling water and cook according to package directions. Reserve 1/2 cup of the cooking water, then drain.
2. Meanwhile, heat the oil or butter in a skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and fennel and cook until tender, stirring occasionally, 10 minutes. Add the half-and-half and simmer for 3 minutes, reducing slightly. Add the wine and return to a gentle simmer.
3. Chop the asparagus into 1/2-inch-long pieces. If you like, reserve a few of the tips to use as a garnish.
4. At the last minute, add the salmon and asparagus to the sauce. Heat for barely a minute, because the salmon doesn't taste as good when it overcooks, then season to taste with salt and pepper.
5. Add the pasta to the sauce, stirring in some of the pasta water if necessary. Serve immediately in shallow bowls, garnished with the chives and extra asparagus tips.

Image (optional):

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Ingredients:

3/4 pound thin asparagus, trimmed 1 pound pasta 1 tablespoon olive oil or butter 1 cup onions, in small dice
3/4 cup fennel or celery, in small dice 1 1/2 cups half-and-half 1/4 cup dry white wine 6 ounces smoked
salmon, in small dice Chopped chives to garnish

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