



Asparagus Soup

Thu, 06/04/2009 - 10:02 -- leslie land

Introduction:

It never fails. You read a recipe for asparagus and no matter what kind of recipe it is: steamed, grilled, stir-fried, whatever, you will be instructed to break off the tough ends and "save them for soup." End of story. Nobody ever tells you how to make this kind of asparagus soup. And you know if you've ever tried it that soups that are not asparagus soup are not improved by having a few asparagus ends thrown in. So. The following recipe is made - primarily - from tough asparagus ends. It's easy, inexpensive and delicious hot or cold. Because asparagus ends are tough and stringy even after they've been cooked to death, you do have to use a food mill to get a velvety puree, but that's the price of frugality. If you want to just throw it into a processor, you have to use tender asparagus (see note at end of the post).

Preparation:

1. Break the asparagus spears where they break naturally and set the tough ends aside. Divide the tender ends into 2 piles, one a little more than twice as big as the other. Refrigerate the larger pile until you want it for vegetable purposes. Chop the smaller pile into 1 inch chunks and set aside.
2. Trim off and discard any really hard white ends of the tough ends. Chop the remainder into 1/2 inch chunks and measure into a large saucepan.
3. Add 1/2 cup coarsely chopped onion, 1 1/2 tablespoons rice, and 2 cups water per cup of ends.
4. Cover and cook over low heat until the vegetables are soft and the rice is fully cooked, about 40 minutes. Add the chopped tender asparagus, recover the pan and cook until vegetables are very soft and the rice is a fluffy mush, about 20 minutes more.
5. Put the whole works through a food mill into a clean saucepan (for hot soup) or a heatproof bowl (for cold). Stir in 1/3 cup cream for each cup of asparagus ends. Reheat the hot. Chill the cold. Taste. Add salt as needed. That's it.

To make the soup using a processor or blender: Follow the proportions in the recipe, using tender asparagus uppers instead of ends. The only thing that changes is timing: Cook the onions and rice in the water for 20 minutes or so before adding the first batch of chopped asparagus. After that, it's exactly the same except a processor is marginally easier to wash than a food mill and takes less manual effort to employ.

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Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 pounds of asparagus (roughly 2 bunches)
- sweet onion such as Vidalia
- basmati or other flavorful white rice
- heavy cream, preferably not ultra pasteurized although at this point that's wishful thinking in a lot of places

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