



Using, Storing and Preserving Asparagus



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Michigan-grown asparagus is available between May and June.

Michigan Fresh: Using, Storing and Preserving Asparagus was first published in March 2015 and revised in July 2023. The original was adapted with permission from the *Complete Guide to Home Canning*, (Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539), USDA, revised 2009. It replaced *WO1046 Food Preservation Series – Asparagus* (MSU Extension, 2006).



Food Safety and Storage

- Wash hands before and after handling fresh produce.
- Keep asparagus in the refrigerator away from meat, poultry and seafood products.
- Wash asparagus under cool running water. Do not use soap.
- Keep asparagus away from raw meats and meat juice to prevent cross-contamination.
- For best quality and nutritive value, preserve only what your family can consume in 12 months.

Yield

1 pound (snapped)	=	2 cups cut up
1 to 1½ pounds fresh	=	1 pint frozen
2½ to 4 pounds fresh	=	1 quart canned
10-pound box	=	7 to 10 pints frozen
24½ pounds	=	a canner load of 7 quarts
16 pounds	=	a canner load of 9 pints
1 crate (31 pounds)	=	7 to 12 quarts canned (average 3½ pounds per quart)
1 bushel (45 pounds)	=	30 to 45 pints frozen or 11 to 18 quarts canned

How to Preserve

Freezing

Frozen asparagus retains both color and flavor better than canned asparagus. Select young, tender stalks with compact tips. Wash thoroughly and sort according to thickness of stalk.

Cut off and discard any tough portions of stalks. Leave spears in lengths to fit the package or cut into 2-inch lengths. Blanch in boiling water, 2 minutes for small spears and 2-inch asparagus lengths, 3 minutes for medium spears and 4 minutes for large spears. Cool promptly in ice water for the same length of time you blanched the asparagus. Change water as it becomes discolored or begins to warm up.

Pack into airtight freezer containers or bags, leaving no headspace. When packing spears, alternate tips and stem ends. In containers that are wider at the top than at the bottom, pack asparagus with tips down. Seal, label, date and freeze the product. Alternatively, freeze individual spears on a cookie sheet or tray. When frozen, pack spears in freezer containers or bags and remove as much air as possible. Seal, label, date and freeze.

Lawn or garden questions?

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Call toll-free 1-888-678-3464.

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Canning

Pressure canning is the *only* safe method of canning asparagus. Asparagus *must* be pressure canned to avoid the potential of the foodborne illness botulism (unless preparing a pickled asparagus recipe).

Select young, tender, tight-tipped spears, 4 to 6 inches long. Wash asparagus and trim off tough scales. Break off tough stems and wash again. Leave asparagus in spears or cut into 1-inch pieces.

• **Raw pack method:** Pack raw asparagus into hot jars, leaving 1-inch headspace. If desired, add ½ teaspoon salt per pint, or 1 teaspoon salt per quart. Fill jars with boiling hot cooking liquid or water, leaving 1-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles; adjust headspace if needed. Wipe jar rims with a clean paper towel, adjust lids and process (see tables that follow for recommended processing times).

• **Hot pack method:** Cover asparagus with boiling water. Boil 2 or 3 minutes. Pack hot asparagus into hot jars, fill jars with boiling hot cooking liquid or water leaving 1-inch headspace. Add ½ teaspoon salt to pints, 1 teaspoon to quarts, if desired. Remove air bubbles; adjust headspace if needed. Wipe jar rims with a clean paper towel, adjust lids and process (see tables that follow for recommended processing times).

References

Andress, E., & Harrison, J. A. (2014). *So easy to preserve* (Bulletin 989). (6th ed.). University of Georgia Cooperative Extension.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2015). *Complete guide to home canning* (Rev. ed.). (Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539). http://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/publications_usda.html

Recommended process time (in minutes) for asparagus in a dial-gauge pressure canner

			Canner Pressure (PSI) at Altitudes of			
Style of pack	Jar size	Process time	0 – 2,000 ft	2,001 – 4,000 ft	4,001 – 6,000 ft	6,001 – 8,000 ft
Hot and raw	Pints	30	11 lb.	12 lb.	13 lb.	14 lb.
	Quarts	40	11 lb.	12 lb.	13 lb.	14 lb.

Recommended process time (in minutes) for asparagus in a weighted-gauge pressure canner

			Canner Pressure (PSI) at Altitudes of	
Style of pack	Jar size	Process time	0 – 1,000 ft	Above 1,000 ft
Hot and raw	Pints	30	10 lb.	15 lb.
	Quarts	40	10 lb.	15 lb.

Let jars sit undisturbed for 12 to 24 hours, check lids to be sure they've sealed, remove rings, wash jars, date, label and store. Food in jars that do not seal must be reprocessed in a clean jar with a new lid within 24 hours, refrigerated or frozen.

Tables were adapted from the *Complete Guide to Home Canning: Guide 4: Selecting, Preparing and Canning Vegetables and Vegetable Products*, USDA, 2015, p. 5. https://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/publications_usda.html#gsc.tab=0.

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