

FARMER IN THE FIELD



GREEN, WHITE & PURPLE, A TRIO OF DELICIOUSNESS

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For those of you who truly believe in eating within the seasons I know you resisted the urge to buy asparagus this winter. Years ago I craved asparagus in December and gave into temptation, I was horribly disappointed. Where was the sweet delicate flavor I was craving? More than likely it was left in the “country of origin”. If you are going to spend your hard earned money on “fresh” produce don’t sacrifice flavor because a product is “available”. Some things can be grown in hothouses but asparagus needs wide open fields.

Asparagus is available in three colors. Most of us enjoy the more common green variety but did you know white asparagus is the same variety? What’s the difference? Sunlight! White asparagus is grown in tall mounds of dirt and harvested just as they start to break through the surface. The asparagus grows at the same rate beneath the ground as they do above ground. The flavor of white asparagus is the same as green asparagus but green has a higher nutritional value than white, albeit very slight. Purple asparagus on the other hand is a different variety altogether. Originating from a region around Albenga, Italy this hybrid known as Violetto d/Albenga contains twenty percent more sugar and is tenderer than its counterparts. Producing a sweeter and nutty flavor the stalks are also larger and meatier.

Purple asparagus is excellent raw or slightly cooked but will lose its color and eye appeal if over cooked, much like purple cauliflower. Its unique flavor pairs well with a range of flavors from sweet to savory. Serve in a salad with wedges of citrus such as grapefruit or orange or drizzle grilled asparagus with olive oil, lemon juice and sea salt. Try sautéing with mushrooms like Shiitake or Enoki and fresh herbs. Cheese, bacon the list of pairings seems endless and also apply to green and white asparagus as well.

All varieties of asparagus are delicious in my book and I have learned my lesson. When it comes to produce and flavor remember to anticipate the season, be patient and enjoy the rewards.

California asparagus season starts in February/March and goes through July.