

Asparagus Fans with Mustard Sauce

I like firm, fat, green asparagus with tight heads, and I always peel the lower third of the stalks with a vegetable peeler to make them tender. I often offer this as a first course.

The asparagus is dressed with a sauce of mayonnaise, mustard, and vinegar and garnished with hard-cooked eggs and chives. Cook the asparagus fairly close to when you will sit down; it tastes better if it is served directly from the boiling water without being refreshed under cold water.

4 Servings

- 2 large eggs
- 1 1/4 pounds large firm green asparagus
- Salt
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh chives, for garnish

Mustard Sauce:

- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- Good dash freshly ground black pepper

Lower the eggs into enough boiling water to cover them and cook at a very gentle boil for 10 minutes. Drain off the water and shake the pan to crack the eggshells. Add ice to the pan and set aside for at least 15 minutes to cool completely. Shell the eggs and place them, one at a time, in an egg slicer, cut through them, then rotate them 45 degrees in the slicer and cut through them again to create strips. Alternatively, chop the eggs with a sharp knife. Set aside.

Peel the lower third of the asparagus spears with a vegetable peeler. Bring 3 cups salted water to a boil in a large skillet. Add the asparagus, cover partially, and bring back to a boil over high heat. Boil over high heat for 4 to 5 minutes, until the spears are tender but still firm. Using a slotted spatula, remove the asparagus from the water and put it on a platter.

For the sauce: Mix all the ingredients together in a small bowl.

At serving time, arrange the asparagus spears on a platter, positioning them so the stem ends are close together and the tips are fanned out. Coat the lower third of the asparagus spears with the sauce and sprinkle the eggs and chives over and around them. Serve.