



# Retailing Asparagus

Brought to you by the Australian Asparagus Council

Home cooks and chefs alike get excited when asparagus appears in early spring, as this not only signifies that the weather is warming up nicely but that there is much delicious eating to be had.

Asparagus used to be considered a 'gourmet' vegetable, but has now become popular for everyday eating.

Australian Asparagus is delicious, quick and easy to cook, good value for money and good for us too!



## Where produced

More than 95 percent of Australia's asparagus is grown in Victoria.

## Seasonal availability

Spring / summer (with the main season being in spring).

## Growing, harvesting and handling

- The asparagus plant thrives in warm weather with humidity and moderate rainfall. It is very sensitive to adverse weather conditions including excessive rainfall and extreme temperatures (both hot and cold). Asparagus is also vulnerable to frost, wind, hail, heat, lack of water and excessive water due to flooding.
- Asparagus harvesting is labour intensive. The spears are cut by hand, usually in the cool of the night and early morning to retain maximum freshness.
- From the field, freshly cut asparagus spears are transported to the packing shed where loose and bunched spears are often packed upright into specially designed boxes, which have a flared base to accommodate the asparagus spears (the butts are thicker in diameter than the spearheads).
- Once packed the asparagus is hydro-cooled to remove field heat and is placed immediately in cool storage.
- Maintenance of the cool chain is vital to prevent continued growth of the spears and deterioration in quality and storage life.
- Once received, good temperature management of between 0°C – 2°C must be maintained.
- Asparagus should not be stored near airflow in your cooler.

## Varieties

Most of the asparagus produced in Australia is green asparagus with a very limited amount of purple asparagus as outlined below. White asparagus is not currently produced in large-scale commercial quantities due to the high costs of production and limited demand as outlined below.

### Green Asparagus

Green asparagus is by far the most popular variety in Australia. It derives its colour from the process of photosynthesis as the spear emerges from the soil into direct sunlight. Its delicious herbaceous flavour and distinctive shape add something special to dishes across the menu from soups and starters to main dishes, BBQs and salads. It can be enjoyed both raw and cooked.

### Purple Asparagus

Purple asparagus is mildly fruit flavoured and tender-crisp. The purple colour is due to the same naturally occurring pigments that give blueberries their purple/blue colour. To retain its fascinating colour, purple asparagus is best eaten raw. When cooked using common cooking methods purple asparagus turns a bronze colour. If cooking, it's best added to dishes at the last minute before serving. Limited supplies of purple asparagus are usually available from mid October to mid December.

### White Asparagus

White asparagus has long been considered a delicacy in Europe and has been grown in Australia in the past. However production of white asparagus is no longer commercially viable due to the high costs of production and limited demand. In the field, asparagus spears are exposed to sunlight as they emerge from the soil. The spears first turn pink and later, the familiar green colour. To produce white spears, asparagus needs to be grown in the dark. To do this large scale, growers have to temporarily erect black 'poly houses' or 'igloos' over the asparagus furrows, and dismantle them at the end of the season.



For more information visit [asparagus.com.au](http://asparagus.com.au)

 [facebook.com/asparaguscouncil](https://facebook.com/asparaguscouncil)

 [instagram.com/aussieasparagus](https://instagram.com/aussieasparagus)



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## Bunch sizes

Asparagus is available loose and in a variety of bunch sizes:

- Regular bunches (about 185g) - the most common size
- 500g bunches - great for family meals and BBQs
- 100g 'mini' bunches - trimmed and ready to use.

## Selecting asparagus

- Look for firm, bright, smooth, spears of uniform size with closed, compact tips.
- When you snap fresh asparagus, it should be crisp, moist and juicy.

## Preparing and cooking asparagus

- Tips for selecting, preparing and cooking asparagus can be found at [asparagus.com.au](http://asparagus.com.au).
- A host of delicious recipes can also be found at [asparagus.com.au](http://asparagus.com.au).

## Nutrition and health

- Asparagus is low in kilojoules, without fat or cholesterol, while providing fibre. That makes it a must for any diet, including a weight loss diet.
- Asparagus provides the essential B group vitamins thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, B6 and biotin.
- Asparagus is a great source of folate. One serve provides over 20 percent of our daily needs. Folate is important for expectant mothers and for reducing heart disease risk.
- It's not only fruit that gives us vitamin C. A serve of asparagus provides about 25 percent of our daily needs of vitamin C.
- Asparagus has a brilliant range of bioactive compounds, such as antioxidants like rutin and beta-carotene. Research strongly suggests that the bioactive compounds in asparagus are keeping us healthy, well into old age.
- Asparagus has potassium to help keep our blood pressure healthy.

## Follow us on Facebook and Instagram

- Follow us on Facebook and Instagram for news, recipes and tips during the season.
- Please encourage your customers to follow us too!  
[facebook.com/asparagusCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/asparagusCouncil)  
[instagram.com/aussieasparagus](https://www.instagram.com/aussieasparagus)

## Point of Sale Materials

- At the start of the season each year, the Australian Asparagus Council supplies independent retailers with point of sale materials to help drive sales.
- Should you wish to obtain more materials please email your request to [enquiries@asparagus.com.au](mailto:enquiries@asparagus.com.au).



## Retail storage and displays

- Asparagus is highly perishable so good cool chain management is essential.
- Ideally asparagus should be kept refrigerated with occasional light misting. Otherwise, display asparagus in the coolest area of the shop, making sure the size of the display fits the stock movement with displays replenished regularly.
- Follow good stock rotation practices by displaying and using first shipments before adding most recent stock.
- Keep displays stocked up and looking fresh and inviting.

## For further information

Please contact the Australian Asparagus Council at [enquiries@asparagus.com.au](mailto:enquiries@asparagus.com.au)

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