

LIFESTYLE

TASTE FOOD

Celebrating Asparagus

By Lynda Balslev

Springtime delivers a bounty of tender green asparagus spears to the farmer's market. Not only are they delicious harbingers of the new season, but green asparagus are a powerhouse of nutrients: naturally rich in potassium, folate and vitamins A, C, E and K -- and they are low in calories to boot.

When choosing asparagus, select rigid (not floppy) stalks with dark, firm tips. To store, trim the ends and refrigerate upright in an inch of water to maintain freshness. When ready to cook, snap off the ends -- the woody ends should naturally break off when the stalks are bent at their base. Thinner asparagus are more tender in flavor and require little time to cook -- a quick blanch or a few minutes to roast or steam is all that's needed -- whereas the thicker, more fibrous asparagus stalks take more time and are ideal for grilling and roasting, which will coax out their natural nutty sweetness.

This recipe embraces the simplicity of the asparagus stalk while elevating it with a smear of lemony labneh. Labneh

is a soft cheese made from strained cultured dairy products, such as yogurt and kefir. It's a tangy, creamy Middle Eastern staple, commonly used as a dip and spread, and it's packed with probiotics and nutrients such as calcium and vitamin A. You can make your own labneh or purchase it in well-stocked supermarkets.

TIPS:

Sumac is a tangy, astringent Middle Eastern spice made from crushed flowers. Use as a garnish for hummus, dips, vegetables and for seasoning meat, chicken and fish.

Za'atar is a blend of oregano, thyme and/or marjoram, with sumac, sesame seeds and salt. It's used as a seasoning and a garnish.

ROASTED ASPARAGUS WITH PRESERVED LEMON LABNEH

Active time: 25 minutes
Total time: 25 minutes
Yield: Serves 4

1 pound asparagus
1 tablespoon olive oil
Sumac
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper

LABNEH:

1 cup prepared labneh (recipe below)
1/2 preserved lemon, pulp removed, skin finely diced,



Roasted Asparagus With Preserved Lemon Labneh. LYNDA BALSLEV / TASTEFOOD

divided
1 small garlic clove, minced or pushed through a press
2 teaspoons preserved lemon juice (or fresh lemon juice)
1/2 teaspoon za'atar

Garnishes: Chopped fresh mint, pistachios, finely grated lemon zest

Heat the oven to 400 degrees.

Spread the asparagus on a rimmed baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Drizzle with the oil and turn to coat. Sprinkle the sumac, salt and black pepper over and turn again to evenly coat.

Roast asparagus in the oven until bright green, crisp-tender and slightly charred in spots, about 15 minutes, depending on thickness.

While the asparagus roasts, scoop the labneh into a bowl. Add half of the preserved lemon skin, the garlic, preserved lemon juice and za'atar and stir to combine.

To serve, smear the labneh on a serving platter or individual serving plates. Arrange the asparagus over the

labneh. Garnish with the remaining lemon skin, chopped mint, pistachios and lemon zest.

LABNEH

Active time: 5 minutes
Total time: 24 hours
Yield: Makes about 1 cup
2 cups whole-milk plain yogurt
1/4 teaspoon kosher salt

Mix the yogurt and salt in a bowl. Line a sieve with cheesecloth and place over a second bowl, with space between the bottom of the sieve and the bowl to collect any drained liquid. Place the yogurt in the cheesecloth; cover the bowl and refrigerate for 24 hours. Remove the labneh from the cheesecloth and transfer to a glass container. Store in the refrigerator for up to one week.

Lynda Balslev is an award-winning writer, cookbook author, and recipe developer based in northern California. Visit TasteFood at TasteFoodblog.com.

Man's online shopping drains coffers and wife's patience

DEAR ABBY:

My husband of 50 years sits in his chair for hours at a time making online purchases he thinks are a necessity or just plain intriguing. We get two or three packages a day, which usually consist of "Buy two and get a third one free" -- fruit corers, citrus squeezers, air fresheners, car-washing supplies, cellphone holders, etc.

What's frustrating is that we already have the perfectly functional items he's purchased. Most of the time they get pushed aside and not used. He also buys food items that are on a repeat subscription, filling our pantry with so much overflow that we must throw away perfectly good food to make room for the newest items.

These purchases go on his credit card and amount to more than \$2,000 per month. My career supported us financially, so my husband didn't have to work, but he was busy with the family in many other ways. Now that I'm retired and no longer have an income, I look at the financial drain his compulsive online shopping has been causing.

We cordially and sometimes humorously discuss his obsession, and he promises to abstain, but the next week, 15 more unnecessary items are delivered. What can I do to avoid being buried under junk in my own home? -- COVERED IN IT IN CALIFORNIA

DEAR COVERED:

You have identified what your problem is: compulsive spending. Now that you are retired, I'm sure the money your husband has been blowing could be put to better use. For some people, compulsive shopping and overspending can become an addiction. Your husband may be one of those; others find the dopamine rush helps with depression.

The next time you



DEAR ABBY
Abigail Van Buren

and your husband discuss his online activities, tell him a 12-step organization called Spenders Anonymous helps people overcome this problem. You can learn more online at spenders.org.

DEAR ABBY: I have a friend, "Maron," who is 65 and divorced from her husband, who had been extremely verbally abusive. Her adult son has a daughter by a former partner who had no interest in the girl. The girl, "Lizzie," is living with her father (Maron's son) in his father's home.

Maron has taken an active interest in her grandchild and spends a lot of time with her. Maron drives Lizzie to preschool even though it is an hour away from her and only a few minutes from her ex-husband's home.

Recently, Maron's ex has been pressuring her to move back in with him. He says Lizzie needs a consistent female presence. However, he also accuses her of being selfish, thus perpetuating his verbal abuse. What should she do? -- IN THE MIDDLE IN WASHINGTON

DEAR IN THE MIDDLE:

Unless Maron wants to escape the fire only to jump back into the frying pan, she should maintain her separate residence. Because her ex's verbal abuse was so bad she left the marriage, she should not allow herself to be guilted into allowing more of it.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

From our HISTORY Sponsored by



'Frisco official sees good business year'

Compiled by **Brady Cloud**
news@morningsun.net

Excerpted stories in Crawford County newspapers archives

100 YEARS AGO

April 17, 1926
Business outlook for the railroads throughout the country for this year is bright and from all indications the rail systems of the country this year will enjoy a more prosperous business era than in 1925, which was a banner year for the railroads, J. R. Koontz, vice president in charge of traffic of the St. Louis & San Francisco rail lines, who was in Pittsburg today, stated. Business of the railroads to date this year has been better than for the corresponding period of last year and indications point to a generally successful year of operation, Mr. Koontz said.

President W. A. Brandenburg of the Teachers College will deliver the commencement address of the Pittsburg high school at the commencement exercises in the high school auditorium May 27, J. L. Hutchinson, principal, announced today in making public programs for the 1926 class night, baccalaureate and commencement exercises. Rev. C. J. Askins, pastor of the Baptist church, will deliver the baccalaureate sermon during the exercises the night of May 23, Mr. Hutchinson said.

Appointment of the historical committee for Pittsburg's 50th anniversary celebration to be held May 20 was announced this after-

noon by John P. Curran, chairman of the general golden jubilee committee. Selection of the personnel of this committee was made by Chairman Curran after careful deliberation, the members picked all being old-time Pittsburgers and persons familiar with the historical growth and development of the city. The duty of this committee will be to compile data on the outstanding historical events occurring during the 50 years of the town's existence.

50 YEARS AGO

April 17, 1976
GIRARD - The Crawford County Commission, Friday, agreed to pay \$371 in damages for a Rural Water District No. 7 water line that was broken recently during a bridge replacement project near Farlington. The water line was broken April 2 by the Maupin Construction Co., Manhattan, which is the contractor replacing the bridge, located three miles west of Farlington. Walter Webb, president of the rural water district, and Dean Bolick, consulting engineer for the water district, appeared before the board of county commissioners to request that the county pay for the damages incurred and that a contract be approved for the relocation of the water line.

A Frontenac man and his wife were forced to jump out of a second-story bedroom window with their baby to escape a fire that extensively damaged the couple's house early Friday morning. Max Mansfield, 29, and his wife

Linda, 27, apparently woke up in their upstairs bedroom smelling smoke coming from somewhere downstairs, Bobby J. Allen, Frontenac police officer said. As they checked out the source of the smoke they encountered flames on the stairwell.

GIRARD - Members of the Crawford County Commission are in disagreement concerning the result of a vote taken on bicentennial-centennial advertising with the local news media at Friday's commission meeting. The vote concerns the commission's approval of the purchase of an advertisement in the Centennial edition of the Morning Sun, to be published on May 20, and the request of a KOAM radio official that the commission also advertise on his radio station. In its April 2 meeting, the county commission agreed to purchase the full-page Morning Sun ad at a cost of \$409.33. Commission Chairman D.J. Saia and Commissioner Pete Murry voted in favor of purchasing the ad, with Commissioner Johnnie Brown voting against it.

25 YEARS AGO

April 17, 2001
Southwestern Bell is offering its customers in the Pittsburg area a new way to deal with unwanted phone calls. Southwestern Bell Privacy Manager allows customers, on a per-call basis, to accept or reject incoming calls that show up as "anonymous," "unavailable," "out of area," "blocked" or "unknown" on a Caller ID display. Privacy Manager works as an enhancement to

Caller ID. The new service intercepts all calls on which telephone number information is not displayable on a subscriber's Caller ID system.

COFFEYVILLE - Pittsburg High School senior Wendi Billionis was selected as a state winner in the Kansas Breaking Traditions Contest held this spring and sponsored by the Kansas State Department of Education. Now Billionis and her partner, senior Cody Robinson, are preparing for another statewide contest to be held May 4. "They're getting ready to go to the state finals in Topeka," said PHS auto tech teacher Mike Elder. Elder said he is proud of all his students, but Billionis is in a special class. "She's basically one in a hundred," he said, of the ratio of women to men in automotive technology.

TOPEKA (AP) - Legislators began cooking up a new school finance package Monday. They tested proposals like spaghetti, throwing ideas on the wall to see what stuck. The Senate Education Committee put ideas on a computer screen projected on a Statehouse wall, building a plan that would increase spending for elementary and secondary education by \$99.1 million above this year's \$2.26 billion. In addition, Sen. John Vratil, R-Leawood, proposed putting an additional \$10 million in the higher education budget for the fiscal year that starts July 1. Vratil suggested \$4 million for a technology program and \$6 million covering utility and operational costs.

SUDOKU

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

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PREVIOUS SOLUTION								
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2	8	3	4	7	6	1	5	9
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8	6	1	3	4	9	5	7	2
5	3	4	7	2	8	6	9	1
9	2	7	6	5	1	4	8	3

HOW TO PLAY:
Each row, column and set of 3-by-3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 through 9 without repetition.