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# SEASONAL RECIPES FROM THE KITCHEN OF BRUCE TILLINGHAST

## ASPARAGUS SAUTÉ WITH MUSTARD AND SPRING HERB BUTTER

### Mustard and Spring Herb Butter

6 Tbsp unsalted butter at room temp  
½ tsp salt  
½ tsp freshly ground pepper  
1 Tbsp grain mustard  
1 generous tsp chopped flat leaf parsley  
1 Tbsp chopped chives  
1 generous tsp very fresh chopped chervil

In a small bowl mix all the ingredients together well. If the butter is very soft, chill slightly.

You can also make this a day or two in advance, refrigerate and allow to soften before using.

NOTE: Chervil likes growing in very cool weather and has two seasons, spring and fall. It is one of the first herbs to show up in the spring and one of the last to give in to frost. It does not grow well in heat. Its delightful anise flavor starts to disappear a day or two after it is picked and it begins to turn pale yellow. Taste it before you buy it. If there is no flavor, pass it by.

### Asparagus Sauté

2 pounds of fresh asparagus, well washed, (ends snapped and discarded) and cut on the diagonal in 1" pieces  
1 Tbsp of canola or olive oil  
Spring Herb Butter cut in tablespoon size pieces  
½ lemon  
salt and fresh ground pepper to taste

In a large sauté pan, heat the oil on medium high heat. Add the cut asparagus. Cook for 10 minutes stirring frequently. Turn the heat down to low, cover and cook about 5 minutes, tossing once or twice.

Remove the cover, add the butter and toss to melt. Adjust the seasoning and drizzle with a little lemon juice before serving.  
Serves 6

NOTE: The size of the stalk in cultivated asparagus has little to do with the age or flavor. In fact, very fresh, young asparagus with finger size stalks are the best, in my opinion. What you do want to watch out for is whether the "buds" on the tip are starting to sprout, indicating that the stalk is mature and getting old. If you bend an asparagus stalk it will snap naturally at the spot where the woody bottom becomes tender. Good fresh asparagus needs no peeling at any size. Peeling asparagus is a matter of taste (and time) and is a nice touch for a formal dinner.

## LITTLENECKS STEAMED WITH GARLIC, FENNEL AND FIRE-ROASTED TOMATOES

36 "count" littlenecks, washed and kept chilled  
2 Tbsp canola or olive oil  
1 fennel bulb, quartered, cored and sliced. (Coarsely chop fennel top fronds and reserve)  
2 tsp chopped garlic  
1 cup chopped Spanish onion  
1½ cups dry white wine  
1+ cup fish or vegetable stock (NOT bottled clam juice)  
1 14oz can Muir Glen Fire Roasted Tomatoes—diced or whole, cut into dice  
1 lemon, cut in half  
2 Tbsp unsalted butter or good quality Extra Virgin olive oil

One or two large sauté pans—littlenecks should be in one layer—not in a pile like mussels or steamers. If using two pans you may need additional ingredients.

Heat the oil over medium-high heat. Add the fennel and sauté until soft, about 4 minutes. Add the littlenecks and cook until edges of fennel start to brown.

Add the chopped onion and garlic. Add wine and stock to deglaze the pan(s).

Cover the pan(s) and cook until the littlenecks are open—this takes about 8 to 10 minutes for very fresh wild littlenecks, but less time for the cultivated variety. (Add more fish or vegetable stock if the liquid is evaporating from the pan.)

When the littlenecks start opening, add the tomatoes and their juices, cover and cook until all the littlenecks are open.

Distribute the littlenecks in warm bowls, return the pan to high heat, add the butter and stir until melted. Taste the juice. Wild littlenecks can be salty. Use a little lemon juice to temper the salt. Pour the hot liquid over the littlenecks and garnish with some of the chopped fennel tops.

Serves 6