

# Asparagus Soup, Two Ways



Nino Ricci, our 2011 Springsong Guest Author, grew up on a farm across the water from Pelee Island. “Spring meant asparagus,” he writes. “Every day after school my brothers and I would walk out to the asparagus field beyond the creek with our asparagus baskets and our asparagus knives to cut whatever had come up since the previous day. For some reason, mourning doves favoured the field. Sometimes we’d find nests in the field right there on the open ground, loose tangles of twigs that seemed put together in a hurry with maybe an egg or two or just the broken shells of one already hatched.”

Italian Asparagus Soup is a Nino favourite, adapted from Lena Raab’s *Classics of Vegetable Cooking* series.

## Italian Asparagus Soup

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 LB fresh asparagus
- 1½ TBSP butter
- 2 TBSP olive oil
- 3 large onions, minced
- Salt
- 8 CUPS vegetable stock
- Parsley, minced
- 1 CUP finely grated parmesan
- Crostini (croutons)

**SERVES 4-6**

### METHOD

Wash asparagus; snap off woody ends and discard. Snap spears into short pieces. Set aside tips.

In a large saucepan, melt oil and butter over low heat. Add the onions and braise slowly and gently until golden. Add the cut asparagus and cook a few minutes. Season with salt, add the vegetable stock, and simmer over low heat for an hour.

Process the soup with an immersion blender or food processor. Or strain the asparagus broth through a sieve into another saucepan. Rub the vegetables through the sieve, add to the broth and stir well.

Add the asparagus tips. Simmer 5 minutes.

To serve, sprinkle the soup with parsley, parmesan, and crostini.

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“What I remember about the mourning dove,” Nino continues, “is its song, a lament as plaintive and haunting as the opening bassoon of the Rite of Spring—the sound for me of those spring afternoons, all the longing of youth caught up in it. The quiet of the field, the long rows waiting for us day after day, and the mourning dove offering its sympathy. Yet hopeful for all that, for every day the rows would end, and the sun would set, and the song cease, and whatever tragedy or loss it seemed to portend would never come to pass.”

This deliciously creamy version comes from Pelee Islanders Darlene and Troy Wiper.

## Creamy Asparagus Soup

### INGREDIENTS

- ½ green onion, chopped
- 1 bunch leeks (2-3), chopped
- 1 TBSP cooking oil
- 2½ CUPS chicken broth
- 2½ LBS fresh asparagus
- ¼ TSP tarragon, minced
- ¼ CUP butter or margarine
- ¼ CUP all purpose flour
- ½ TSP salt
- ¼ TSP white pepper
- 3 CUPS half & half cream
- 1½ TSP lemon juice

### METHOD

- Trim ends off asparagus and cut in 1-inch pieces.
- In a large sauce pan over medium heat, sauté onion and leeks slowly in oil until tender.
- Add broth, asparagus, and tarragon. Simmer until tender, about 8-10 minutes.
- Mash or blend until smooth.
- In a large soup pot, melt butter, then stir in flour, salt. Cook & stir for 2 minutes, until smooth and golden. Gradually add cream. Stir in asparagus mix and lemon juice. Heat through. (Do not boil.)
- Garnish with tarragon sprigs and grated Swiss cheese, if desired.

**SERVES 6-8**