

GRILLED ASPARGUS WITH PROSCIUTTO, FRIED BREAD AND POACHED EGGS

Source: Ad Hoc by Thomas Keller

Prepared: March 2016 by Kimi Nelson

Makes: 6 servings

- 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
 - 6 large eggs
 - 2 bunches pencil-thin asparagus
 - Canola oil
 - Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
 - 3 ounces thinly sliced prosciutto
 - 2 cups **torn croutons**
 - Extra-virgin olive oil
 - Aged balsamic vinegar
 - Fleur de sel
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- 1. To poach the eggs, bring 6 to 8 inches of water to a boil in a large, deep saucepan. Prepare an ice bath. Add the vinegar to the boiling water and reduce the heat to a simmer. Crack 1 egg into a small cup or ramekin. Using a wooden spoon, stir the water at the edge of the pan twice in a circular motion to get the water moving, then add the egg to the center of the pan. Simmer gently for 1 1/2 minutes, or until the white is set but the yolk is still runny. With a slotted spoon, carefully transfer the egg to the ice bath. Skim and discard any foam that has risen to the top of the boiling water. Cook the remaining eggs in the same fashion, 1 at a time. (The eggs can be poached several hours ahead and stored in ice water in the refrigerator.)
 - 2. When you are ready to cook the asparagus, prepare a charcoal or gas grill for cooking over medium heat or heat a grill pan over medium-high heat. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
 - 3. Hold an asparagus spear with your hands and bend it to break off the less tender bottom end. Trim all of the asparagus to the same length. If using medium or large asparagus, peel the stalks with a vegetable peeler. Spread the asparagus on the parchment-lined baking sheet, generously coat with canola oil, and season with salt and pepper.
 - 4. Arrange the asparagus on the grill or, working in batches, in the grill pan. Cook the asparagus until tender, about 1 1/2 to 2 minutes per side, flipping with a narrow spatula. Arrange the asparagus on a platter.
 - 5. Meanwhile, bring a large pot of water to a simmer. If you're a perfectionist, an aspiring three-star chef, or you just can't help yourself, use a small pair of scissors to trim any uneven edges from the poached eggs. Using a skimmer or a slotted spoon, lower the eggs into the simmering water for about 30 seconds, just to reheat. Remove the eggs and blot the bottoms with paper towels.

- 6. Season the eggs with salt and pepper and place them around the asparagus. Arrange the prosciutto and **torn croutons** on the platter, then drizzle all of the components with olive oil and balsamic and sprinkle with fleur de sel and pepper.

TORN CROUTONS

- For the garlic confit and oil
 - 1 cup peeled garlic cloves
 - About 2 cups canola oil
- For the croutons
 - 1 loaf country bread
 - 1 cup garlic oil
 - 2 tablespoons (1 ounce) unsalted butter
- Make the garlic confit and oil
 - 1. Cut off and discard the ends of the garlic cloves. Place the cloves in a small saucepan and add enough oil to cover them by about 1 inch. None of the garlic cloves should be poking above the oil.
 - 2. Set the saucepan on a diffuser over medium-low heat. The garlic should cook gently, with very small bubbles coming up through the oil but not breaking the surface. If it is cooking too quickly, adjust the heat as necessary and/or move the pan to one side of the diffuser. Cook the garlic for about 40 minutes, stirring every 5 minutes or so, until the cloves are completely tender when pierced with the tip of a knife. Remove the saucepan from the heat and allow the garlic to cool in the oil. Refrigerate the garlic in a covered container, submerged in the oil, for up to 1 week.
- Make the croutons
 - 3. Cut the crusts off the loaf of bread. Tear some of the bread into irregular pieces no larger than 2 inches. You need about 3 cups of croutons; reserve any remaining bread for another use.
 - 4. Pour enough garlic oil into a large sauté pan to measure a depth of 1/8 inch. Heat the oil over medium heat until hot. Spread the torn bread in a single layer in the pan (if your pan is not large enough, use 2 smaller pans). Add the butter. The oil and butter should be bubbling. If you hear sizzling, the heat is too high. Adjust the heat as necessary, and stir the croutons often as they cook. Cook until the croutons are crisp and turn a beautiful rich golden brown on all sides, 15 to 20 minutes.
 - 5. Move the croutons to one side of the pan and keep warm until ready to serve. (Do not drain on paper towels; you want the flavors of the oil intermingled with the other ingredients as you eat the croutons in a salad.) Torn croutons should be used the day they are made (you can reheat them in a low oven before serving if necessary).

Cook's Notes: This was very good and I would definitely make it again! I thought the croutons were too oily and would drain them next time.

