

Appetizing Asparagus Recipes

It's a very dear friend who shares their asparagus. Few things herald spring's true arrival better than these slender spears poking up tentatively from the earth.

Rather than ramble on, I'll get to the point. Here are three of my absolute, all time favorite asparagus recipes.

ASPARAGUS AND TOMATO BAKE

Alice Boychyn, a long time vendor at Toronto's St. Lawrence Market and an asparagus grower, shared this dish with me.

1/4 cup butter
1 1/2 lbs fresh asparagus
5 medium sized tomatoes, peeled and diced (I have used drained, chopped plum tomatoes)
1 medium onion, peeled and minced

Anita Stewart

Notes from a country cook

1/4 cup minced celery
2 tbsps dry breadcrumbs
2 tbsps grated Parmesan cheese
1 1/2 tbsps minced fresh basil
1 1/2 tbsps granulated sugar (optional)
1/2 tsp salt
1/4 tsp freshly ground pepper
Preheat the oven to 350F.

In a 9 x 13" baking dish, melt the butter. Line the bottom of it with the cleaned and trimmed asparagus. Cover it with the tomatoes, onion, celery, breadcrumbs, cheese and basil. If the tomatoes are very acidic, add the sugar. Sprinkle with salt and pep-

per. Cover and bake for 45 minutes or until the asparagus is tender.

Makes 4-6 servings.

CREAM OF ASPARAGUS AND WILD LEEK SOUP

Tiny wild leeks may be grown in profusion all over our forests. Dig them carefully, shaking any excess soil off. Wash them and dice the entire plant. Regular cooking onions or cultivated leeks may be substituted if you don't have access to the wild variety.

1 lb fresh asparagus, cleaned and trimmed 1/3 cup butter
1 - 1 1/2 cups minced leeks



5 cups chicken or vegetable stock

1 tbsp fresh or dried dill weed
1/2 cup heavy cream (35%)
Salt and pepper, to taste
Cut the asparagus into 1"

chunks. Set aside.

Melt the butter in a heavy saucepan and saute the leeks until tender, 4 - 5 minutes. Add the stock and bring to a boil. Drop in the asparagus and dill, cover and cook until tender, about 15 minutes.

Pour in the heavy cream. Stir then puree the soup in a blender or food processor until smooth. Return to the saucepan, taste and season, if necessary with salt and pepper.

Garnish with a little chopped dill or a dollop of sour cream.

Makes 4 - 6 servings.

STEAMED ASPARAGUS WITH HOLLANDAISE SAUCE

The simpler the dish, the more elegant. That was the philosophy

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House trashing a horror story

Have you heard the latest Horror Story? No, it isn't the newest Freddy Kreuger film, nor is it yet another sequel to all those other sequels in the Rocky series. This horror story is for real, and it's out there in our streets. The streets of Thunder Bay, at any rate, 'cause that's where this little, no, big, horror took place according to an interview I caught on radio station CBQ with a local unnamed lady to whom this horror happened.

Her house was TRASHED!

By a gang of teen-aged kids!

I kid you not. I heard this with my own ears, and still can't believe that I actually did. Trashed! and for why? For no good reason whatsoever, except that these stupid kids were BORED, and had nothing better to do. So, when the word got around on their grapevine that this lady and her husband were going away that particular week-end leaving the joint in the ineffectual care of their own teen-aged kids, a whole horde of them descended upon the place like a

Olga Landiak

Life, According to Baba

swarm of locusts and proceeded to 'trash' it.

You know what 'trash it' means? It means they went around practically reducing the house and its contents to the condition of a World War bombed-out state. They ripped up the furniture, flung down pictures and artifacts and stomped them to pieces, tore the curtains and drapes to bits, and opened up all kinds of kitchen stuff and sprayed, threw or dumped it all over the walls, ceilings and carpets. And then the dear little darlings pocketed whatever was portable, after their kiddie fun-time, and blew off into the dark evil night from whence they had come. How's that for 'doing your own thing', hey?

How the lady remained so calm and cool while reciting this horror list was beyond my comprehension. But maybe the

thought of all the insurance which would cover the cost of repairing and replacing her trashed-up things, kept her this way. My, I would have been frothing at the mouth even months, years later.

What on earth is going on? What's the matter with the youngsters of today? Have so many of them gone so stark staring mad that they are not only giving the rest of their generation a bad, bad name, but alienating most of us adults even further than we already are? Are they so bored with the fat life of North American living that all they live for is some form of hands-on violence by which to expend their unused energy? If they'd stop contemplating their self-centred navel for a moment, they'd discover there are plenty of things to be done out there in the market place, and in volunteer services, to relieve them of their boredom.



So what's the matter with their heads anyway? Or is it just a form of collective insanity which has taken over the vacuum created by the abandonment of moral standards which used to keep our society in check? And is this why kids are going around 'trashing' houses, people, themselves?

These are supposed to be 'our hope for the future'? The dear innocent children and grandchildren for whom we are supposed to be so concerned re depleting world resources and a polluted environment? I know, I know, the greater percentage of kids are not

like this mad mob, and thank goodness for that, but even these few trashy ones are a percentage too many. Because with this kind of kinky, unthinking behaviour, they are giving back to us a reflection of the lax, loose, immoral society we have allowed to come about through our adult apathy. Or maybe we like it this way?

Discipline and self-control are not merely words in a dictionary. They really mean something when applied. Something which has gone out of the world today. Something very much to be regretted. May be these 'trashy' kids are just symptomatic of a very 'trashy' today which is to most people's liking. It sure as heck isn't to mine.

Oh yes, a horror sequel to this little horror story. The lady interviewed didn't dare let her name be used or her address given out, in case one of these trashy little monsters was listening in and they'd pay her a return visit in revenge. How do you like them apples?

No improvement after two years

On January 18, 1988 five members of the Sandy Lake Indian Band - Josias Fiddler, Luke Mamakeesic, Allan Meekis, Peter Fiddler and Peter Goodman - began a hunger strike in the lounge at the Sioux Lookout Zone Hospital. They were trying to draw attention to years of frustration with health care services at the hospital, and back home in Sandy Lake. They stopped the fast three days later, after marathon negotiating sessions with leaders of the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, and Dave Nicholson, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Health and Welfare Canada, hammered out an agreement to hold a full scale public review of native health services.

The report that arose from that review was released one year ago, in May of 1989. But the poor health services that sparked the hunger strike have not improved. Some people I've spoken to recently even say they're getting worse. This week's column, and next week's,



NORTHERN INSIGHTS

by Larry Sanders



are devoted to that hunger strike, and what's happened since. - L.S.

I was there for much of that hunger strike, covering the event as a reporter, I caught a few hours sleep each night in a nearby hotel, but stayed at the hospital most of the time, in the lounge. It was a deeply moving event - a combination of a political sit-in like the ones staged by radical university students in the 1960's, and a religious ceremony by native people deeply worried about their own health, and their children's.

Early each morning, a pipe ceremony was held by the fasters. Even though they grew weaker

each day, the ceremony seemed to give them renewed strength. Metis leaders joined the ceremony one morning, offering not only tobacco but also much need statements of moral support from native leaders all over the country. During the day, well-wishers would drop in. Squeezed in between were hastily called news conferences, and negotiation sessions upstairs in the Zone Hospital Director's office.

The second afternoon of the fast, a doctor came to visit the lounge. I offered to leave, but the fasters asked me to stay. They said they didn't mind if I heard their private conversations with a doctor about their own health, as

long as I didn't use any names. The doctor, who seemed sympathetic to the aims of the hunger strikers, was concerned that one of the five men was a diabetic, and needed to be on a regular diet. His blood sugar levels were getting out of control, the longer the fast continued. The other four fasters told their friend it was alright if he started eating again, so he wouldn't run the risk of going into a diabetic coma.

The diabetic hunger striker said something that afternoon I will always remember. It made me realize these five men were absolutely serious. The diabetic (who's name I have pledged not to use) said, "I'm here for my

children, and grandchildren. I will stay until I die, if I have to. The federal government has to realize how serious we are." The doctor left, deeply worried about his patient.

The doctors must have relayed his concerns to his superiors at the Zone Hospital, but I was never told that officially. All at once the negotiations, that had been sputtering along up to that point, advanced quickly. 24 hours after the doctor's visit with the diabetic, terms of reference had been hammered out for an inquiry into the hunger strikers' complaints. The Nishnawbe-Aski Nation would appoint one representative to the inquiry, Ottawa would appoint one person, and the two sides would agree on a neutral chairman. The five fasters cleaned up the hospital lounge, went from ward to ward thanking everyone, then went out to enjoy a much needed meal, and a good night's sleep.

It took until March of 1988 for the inquiry to get organized.

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