

Asperges à la sauce hollandaise au citron (GF)

Serves 6

Ingredients:

5/6 asparagus stems per person
2 egg yolks
2 tsp (10 ml) lemon juice
2 tsp (10 ml) white (mild) vinegar
110 g melted butter
Salt and pepper

Sugar cured salmon (gravlax)

300 g fresh salmon
1tbs sea salt (flakes not powder)
2 tbs sugar (castor or granulated)
Optional flavours – lemon or orange zest,
chopped fresh dill, crushed juniper or fennel
seed, a dash of vodka or gin, grated fresh
beetroot, wasabi or horseradish



Asparagus is a member of the lily family and has a short season between April / May here at Millepetit. The French prefer the thicker woodier stems as they believe they have developed more flavour. We choose to serve them lightly steamed or microwaved (modern twist!) with a classic lemon Hollandaise (butter) sauce (served above with cured salmon)

Method:

To prepare the asparagus:

Take a stalk in both hands and break it where it bends (the woody bit). Line up the heads of the asparagus against the edge of your chopping board and trim the bases to the same length.

Trim any green offcuts into little discs and reserve. These are easiest to cook in a microwave so that you are not chasing them around the steamer or saucepan.)

Seasoned with a little salt, asparagus stems can be steamed or microwaved for between 4-6 minutes, depending on their thickness (and whether you prefer them well cooked as do the French).

To prepare the Lemon Hollandaise:

Blend or process two egg yolks together with a little salt until well combined (you can use a small processor like we did or a hand beater or whisk)

In a small pan, warm the vinegar and lemon juice until just simmering

Pour over the yolks and run again until well combined

In the same pan, melt the butter until it is hot and foaming

Slowly trickle in the butter in a thin stream, whisking vigorously until it is incorporated and the sauce has thickened and emulsified

Notes and variations:

The sauce can be served warm immediately, at room temperature or chilled in the fridge. Covered in the fridge, it will keep for 3-4 days. It may need thinning with a little warm water as the butter will have solidified.

The sauce can also be frozen. To “bring it back”, allow it to reach room temperature, put a fresh egg yolk into a bowl and slowly beat in the remaining sauce until it thickens again.

Béarnaise Sauce replaces the lemon juice with chopped shallot and tarragon simmered in the vinegar and strained. Fresh herbs such as tarragon or chervil are then mixed through the sauce.

Maltaise Sauce replaces the lemon with orange juice – lovely with salmon or chicken!

To create a more substantial starter, serve Asparagus Hollandaise with a salmon gravlax or crisped Coppa d’Perigord or Parma ham or with soft boiled quail’s eggs and shavings of Parmesan, or use the Hollandaise for Eggs Benedict.

Sugar cured salmon

Take a thick salmon fillet around 300 g – try to get one which is quite even throughout rather than a thick and thin end. Wash, dry, trim and debone.

Combine two tablespoons of sugar with one of salt. Use a small plastic container which is slightly larger than the salmon. Lay the salmon on the salt mix, and then turn it over so you have some on the other side as well. Cover with cling film. (Some recipes put a weight on it – we feel this dries it out too much)

Leave for about 36 hours (I start mine in the morning and then turn it at roughly lunch time the next day.) There should be plenty of liquid which is the water being drawn out by the cure and the flavour going in. Cut it through to check that it is cured right through – it should be firm and opaque, if not leave a little longer.

Adding flavour. You can add any flavours or textures to your cure. Try lemon zest; chopped dill, shredded fresh beetroot; (just a little for colour), a splash of gin with crushed juniper berries; a splash of vodka; fresh grated horseradish, a little wasabi, plain is good too! Keep in the fridge for up to three days, freeze or cook in a pasta sauce with tomato and vodka!