

STEAMED ASPARAGUS WITH CAPER CRUMBS

I am the kind of person who does a little hop, skip and jump when I see the produce that signals a season in my local fruit shop. Asparagus is certainly a pointer to spring and here local asparagus has started to peep into vegetable stands. I love it! This recipe first appeared in my Entertaining book and the original recipe is such an easy way to dress up gently steamed greens. Asparagus loves to get glammed up with a little salty crunch so this minty, nutty caper crumb is just the ticket.



Serves: 6

Time: 30 minutes



INGREDIENTS

60 grams (2 oz) day-old sourdough bread, torn into pieces
1 lemon, zest only, no white pith
1 tbsp salted capers, rinsed and drained
40 grams (1.4 oz) raw almonds
1 tsp sweet paprika
2 sprigs fresh flat-leaf parsley, leaves only
2 sprigs fresh mint, leaves only
½ tsp ground black pepper
1 tbsp unsalted butter
1 tbsp olive oil, plus extra for garnishing
500 grams (17.5 oz) water, plus extra for cooling
2 bunches asparagus, woody ends trimmed



METHOD

1. Place bread and lemon zest into mixing bowl and chop **5 sec/speed 8**.
2. Add capers, almonds, paprika, parsley, mint and pepper and chop **6 sec/speed 7**.
3. Place a large frying pan over medium-high heat and add butter and olive oil. Transfer crumb mixture into pan and fry, stirring frequently, until golden brown and crunchy (5-10 minutes). Transfer into a bowl and set aside.
4. Place water into mixing bowl. Place Varoma dish into position and place asparagus into it. Secure Varoma lid and steam 10 min/Varoma/speed 1. Transfer asparagus into a bowl filled with cold water to cease cooking. Once cooled, drain and transfer onto paper towel and pat dry.
5. Place asparagus onto a serving platter and drizzle with olive oil. Scatter generously with crumbs before serving.

Variations

- Replace almonds with walnuts, pine nuts or hazelnuts, if preferred.
- If asparagus is not in season, use broccolini instead.
- This crumb (and the variations) also work well on boiled or steamed potatoes. I also love it on grilled cos lettuce.
- Try adding 50 grams (1.8 oz) finely chopped chorizo or bacon to crumb mixture in step 2.



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- Use blood orange zest instead of lemon zest and squeeze blood orange juice into the steaming water for a little more citrusy atmosphere. You can grate extra zest over the top to serve too, because it looks so pretty.
- Try anchovies instead of (or as well as) capers.
- Use smoked paprika instead of sweet paprika.
- Add ½ tsp caraway seeds at step 2.
- Sub out some or all of the parsley for sage.
- Use Australian pepperberry instead of black pepper.

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SHOPPING LIST:

- Day-old sourdough bread (60 grams / 2 oz)
- Lemon (1)
- Salted capers (1 tbsp)
- Raw almonds (40 grams / 1.4 oz)
- Sweet paprika (1 tsp)
- Fresh flat-leaf parsley (2 sprigs)
- Fresh mint (2 sprigs)
- Ground black pepper (½ tsp)
- Unsalted butter (1 tbsp)
- Olive oil (1 tbsp)
- Asparagus (2 bunches)



NOTES & TIPS:

→ • plus extra for garnishing