

Roasted Asparagus with Olive & Nasturtium Leaf Tapenade

For a fresh room-temperature way to enjoy asparagus, we like to dress them with a sauce made with Castelvetrano olives, which have a buttery richness that reminds us of hollandaise. In spring, we often reach for young nasturtium leaves. Before the plant flowers, the delicate leaves have a peppery, mildly bitter flavor that's great in salads and sauces. If you can't find them, arugula makes a good substitute. Smoked almonds are another favorite "secret seasoning" in our kitchen. When finely chopped, they adhere well to food and add an irresistible bacon-y dimension.

SERVES 8

4 lb large asparagus spears, tough ends trimmed
1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 teaspoon kosher salt
3/4 cup Castelvetrano olives, pitted
1 small clove garlic
1 small shallot, chopped
Leaves from 5 tarragon sprigs
6 small, young nasturtium leaves
or baby arugula leaves
Finely grated zest of 1 lemon
2 heads frisee
1/2 cup smoked almonds, very finely chopped
2 oz cold Point Reyes Toma cheese or aged manchego cheese, grated on a Microplane or other fine-rasp grater

To roast asparagus: Position two racks evenly in the oven and preheat to 400°F. Place two sheet pans in the preheated oven for 5 minutes. Meanwhile, in a large, shallow bowl, toss the asparagus with 4 teaspoons of the oil and the salt. Remove the hot pans from the oven, carefully spread the asparagus in a single layer on the hot pans, and then return the pans to the oven. Roast for 8 minutes, rotating the pans halfway through, until crisp-tender.

Meanwhile, make the sauce and prep the frisée: In a blender or food processor, combine the olives, garlic, shallot, tarragon, nasturtium leaves, lemon zest, and remaining olive oil and process until the mixture has the consistency of a chunky paste. You should have about 1 cup. Trim the frisée, discarding the green tops and stems. Cut the pale white leaves that remain into 1-inch pieces.

To serve: Divide the almonds, cheese, and 1/2 cup of the olive sauce between the two sheet pans with the asparagus and toss to coat evenly. Transfer to a serving platter and garnish with the frisée. Serve at room temperature, with the remaining olive sauce on the side (or reserve for another use, covering and refrigerating it for up to 3 days).

Kendall-Jackson Jackson Estate Camelot Highlands Chardonnay