

Raw Asian-style Asparagus and Soy Bean Salad

By Kathy Gunst

When asparagus are fresh from the ground, they are so tender you can eat them raw and really take advantage of their full, earthy flavors. Here they are cut into thin pieces, tossed with an Asian-flavored dressing and sprinkled with lightly steamed edamame (soy beans). This light, refreshing salad should be made no more than 2 hours before serving or it loses its crisp texture. If you can't find edamame, you can substitute fresh peas or fava beans.

Ingredients:

1 bunch (about 1 pound) asparagus, green, white, or purple, trimmed and peeled
2 tablespoons Asian sesame oil
2 teaspoons soy sauce
2 teaspoons rice wine vinegar or white wine vinegar
1 teaspoon grated or finely chopped fresh ginger
A few grindings of black pepper
1 cup edamame soy beans (do not defrost if frozen)

Instructions:

Cut the asparagus in half lengthwise and then slice on the diagonal into 1 ½-inch pieces. Place the asparagus in a bowl and add the sesame oil, soy sauce, vinegar, ginger, and pepper and gently toss. Let sit about 15 minutes, but no more than 2 hours.

Meanwhile, bring a medium pot of water to boil over high heat. Cook the edamame beans (in their shells) for 2 minutes. Drain and place under cold running water to stop cooking. Drain again. Pop the beans out of the pods; you should have about ½ cup.

Place the marinated asparagus on a serving platter. Sprinkle the steamed soy beans on top and serve at room temperature or chilled.

Serves: 4 as a side dish