

WORDS THAT DESCRIBE ASPARAGUS

FLAVOR • COLOR • TEXTURE

fresh

grassy

woody

fleshy

juicy

tender

delicate

creamy

sweet

artichoke

sulphurous

fibrous

succulent

stringy

meaty

nutty



Looking Back

History

Historians say that the cultivation of asparagus likely originated in, Mesopotamia (the area centered between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers), and present-day Iraq, along with regions in Europe, Asia and northern Africa. The earliest known depiction of asparagus is on an Egyptian frieze dating to about 3000 BC.

It's said that Queen Nefertiti named it the "food of the gods."

The Greeks and Romans dried it for winter use; Cato's "De agri cultura" (160 BCE) mentions asparagus. Emperor Caesar Augustus (63 BC–AD 14) of Rome ordered the military to collect asparagus, some of which was taken into the Alps, where it was frozen for later use.



What's in a Name?

Asparagus officinalis, aka...

The word asparagus derives from Persian asparag or sprout, and the Greek asparagos, then, by way of medieval Latin to — sparagus. It was shortened to sparage in Late Old English and then further modified to asperages in Middle English. It was anglicised to sperach or sperage in the 16th century. Asparagus also is known by the folk name sparrow grass or sparrow root.



Maps, Migration, & Culture

Around the World

Asparagus has naturalized in temperate regions around the world. Asparagus grows wild along the seashores and riverbanks of North Africa and Asia, and it's said, so abundantly on the Russian steppes that cattle graze it like grass.

Asparagus was introduced in England by the Romans and then forgotten. However, French monks preserved cultivation techniques, and it regained favor when Louis XIV ordered gardeners to grow asparagus in his Versailles hothouses.

In England, it returned during the reign of Henry VIII and became a delicacy.

Asparagus roots were brought to US by European settlers in the early 1650s.



**The Spoken Word
Google Translates**

Words for Asparagus

Latin: asparagus

Arabic: نويجه

Cantonese: 筍

French: asperge

Haitian Creole: aspèj

Hindi: शतावरी

Italian: asparago

German: spargel

Japanese: アスパラガス

Persian: هب وچ رام

Spanish: espárragos

Ukrainian: спаржа



Heart & Soul

Art & Literature

**“That fascinated me would be the asparagus, tinged with ultramarine and rosy pink which ran from their heads, finely stippled in mauve and azure, through a series of imperceptible changes to their white feet, still stained a little by the soil of their garden-bed: a rainbow loveliness that was not of this world.”
~ Marcel Proust, “Swann’s Way,” 1913**



National Gallery of Art: Still Life with Asparagus and Red Currants – Adriaen Coorte, 1696



A Closer Look

Botany

Asparagus is a perennial plant belonging to the family Asparagaceae. It is an edible shoot, commonly called a spear, that emerges early in the spring from an underground crown. The female plants produce berries. Feathered fern-like foliage and flowers indicate the end of the plant's season.



“I sat down on the ditch bank and for five minutes, I did nothing but just look at one old, dry asparagus stalk. It looked very much like the dead weeds and plants that surrounded it, but there were differences. The old asparagus plant stood about three feet high and had a central stem or “trunk” about a half inch in diameter which distinguished it from weeds with forking stems...Side branches were larger near the ground and tapered near the top, giving the whole plant a slender Christmas tree outline...”

~ Euell Gibbons, “Stalking the Wild Asparagus,” 1962



Ripe for the Picking

Season's Best

The height of the commercial asparagus season in New Jersey stretches from April to May, and edges into June, weather permitting. To harvest, break spears off by hand near the soil level, when they are 6 to 10 inches long, taking care not to disturb nearby crowns that may be generating spears as well.



Soil & Sun & Water

In the Garden

Asparagus usually is planted in May so that foliage (fern) develops before winter. Plant asparagus in fertile, well-draining, and sandy soil, in full sun.

Asparagus takes three years from planting until first harvest. After that, those plants will produce a crop in early spring months for about eight to 15 years.

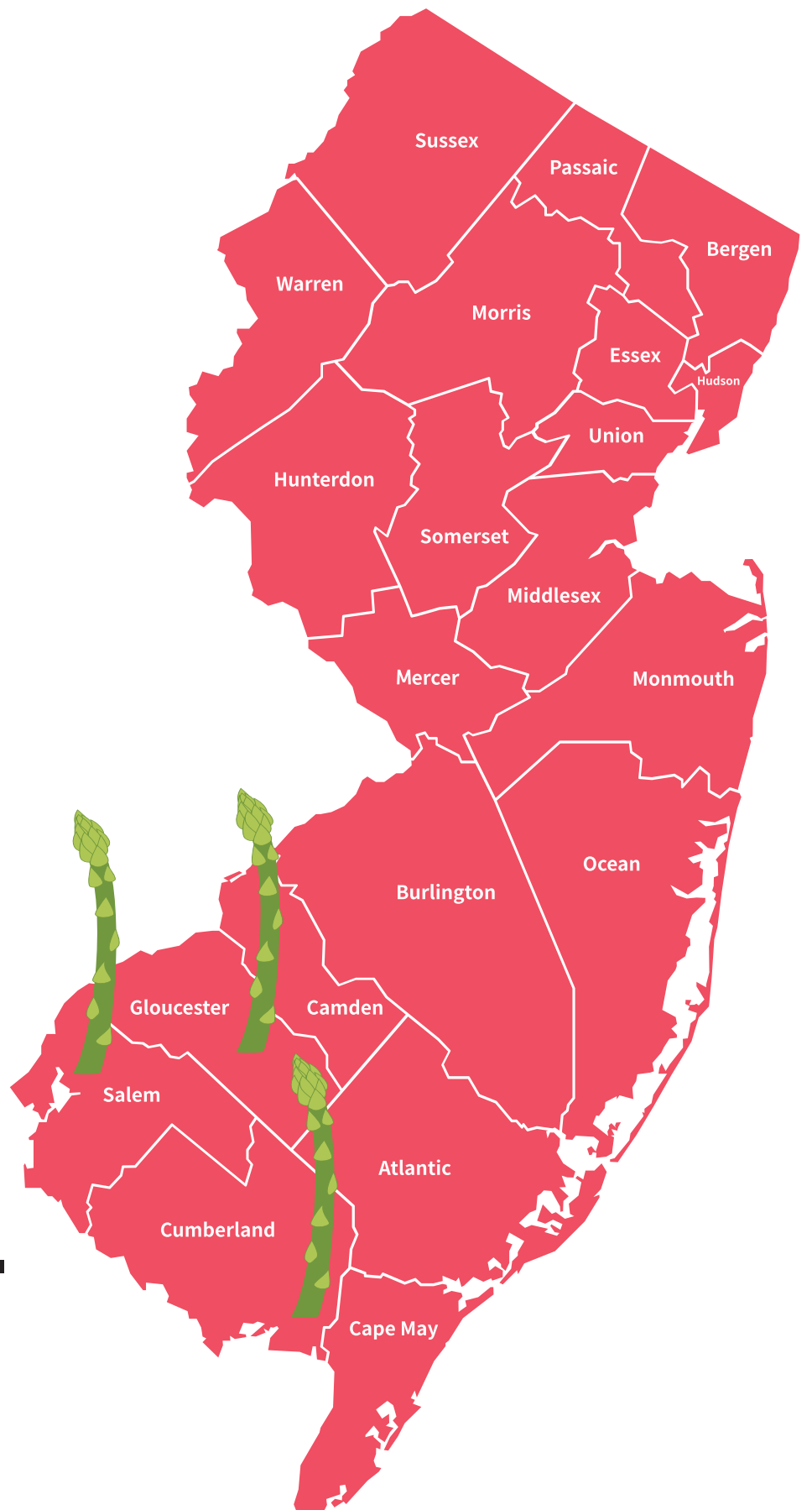
Companion/guild plantings: Strawberries, dill, basil, parsley, marigolds, peas, eggplant.



By The Numbers

Math & Money

The main asparagus-producing country is China, followed by Peru, Mexico, and Germany. Asparagus from the Caborca region of Mexico is one of the biggest suppliers in the North American market. The US is the seventh-largest producer; New Jersey ranks 4th, nationally. The Garden State's asparagus crop brings in ~\$10 million to \$11 million annually. Most asparagus in the Garden State is grown in Salem, Gloucester, and Cumberland counties.



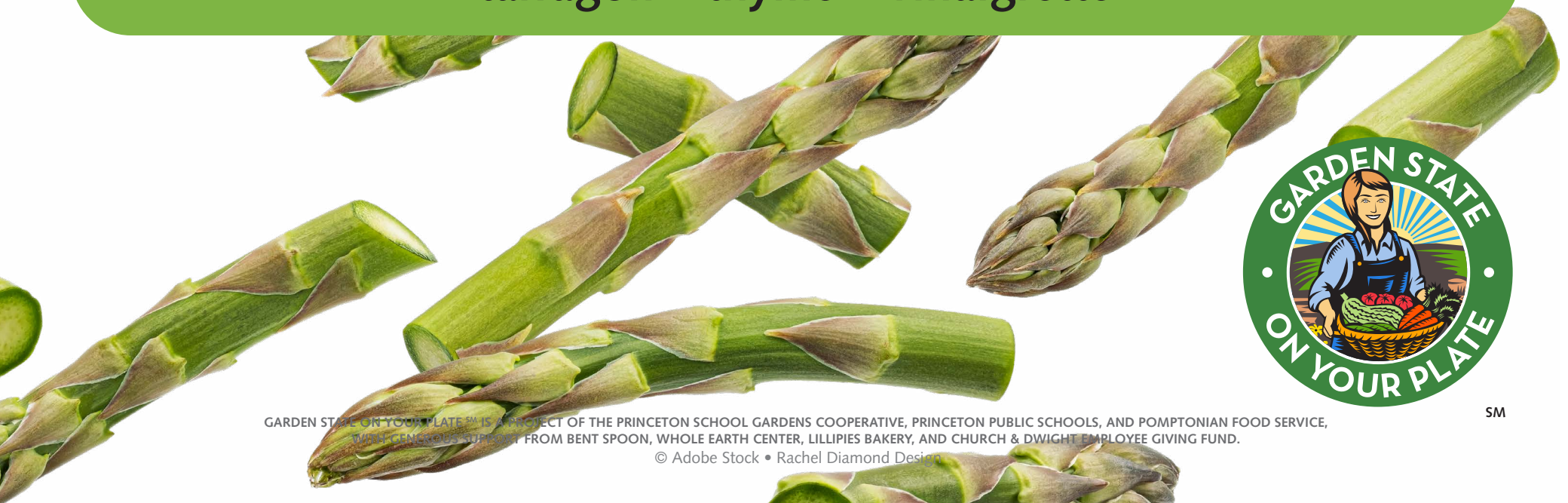
Asparagus &...

Ingredient Pairings

Classic combinations with asparagus include capers, ham, and shrimp; cayenne and lime; garlic, ginger and sesame; lemon, olive oil and black pepper; morels and ramps; Parmesan and eggs; hazelnuts and Parmesan. William III of Orange (1650-1702) is said to have taught Jonathan Swift how to eat asparagus in the Dutch manner (with a sauce of melted butter poured into a hard-boiled egg sprinkled with ground pepper and nutmeg).

FLAVORINGS THAT GO WELL WITH ASPARAGUS

almonds • anchovies • basil • bay leaf • butter • capers
caraway seed • cayenne • chevre • chervil • chives • crab
heavy cream • dill • eggs • fava beans • garlic • ginger • ham
leeks • lemon • lime • lobster • mascarpone • mayonnaise
mushrooms • mustard • olive oil • onions • orange • oysters
pancetta • Parmesan • parsley • pasta • peas • pepper
pistachios • potatoes • prosciutto • rice • saffron • sage
salmon • scallions • sesame seed • shallots • soy sauce
tarragon • thyme • vinaigrette



Senses & Physiology

In the Kitchen

Trim each spear about an inch to remove the woody portion, either with a sharp knife or by finding the spot on each spear where it snaps off readily. Rinse vigorously by swishing heads in cold water to remove stray bits of sand and soil.

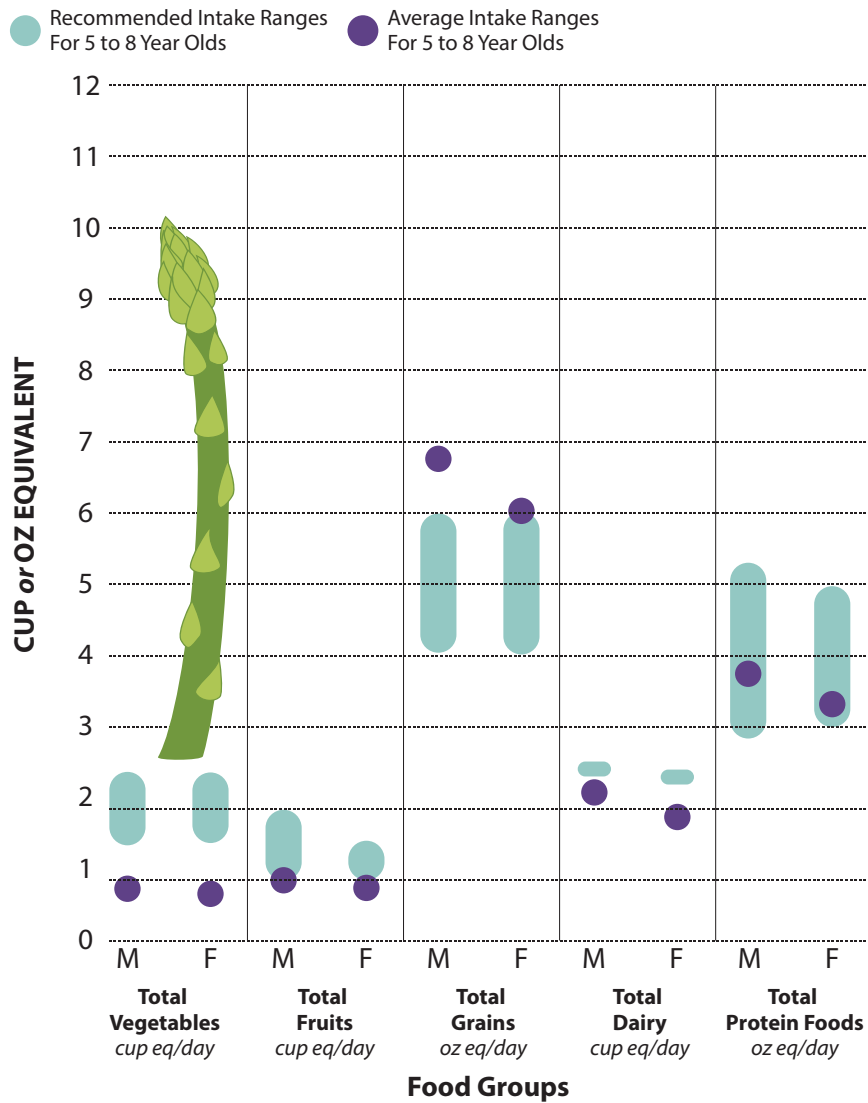
Asparagus can be eaten raw, blanched, fried, roasted, sauteed, steamed, and stir-fried. In every case, keep the cooking very short. Roman Emperor Augustus reportedly coined a phrase for quick tasks: "velocius quam asparagi conquantur" (faster than you can cook asparagus).



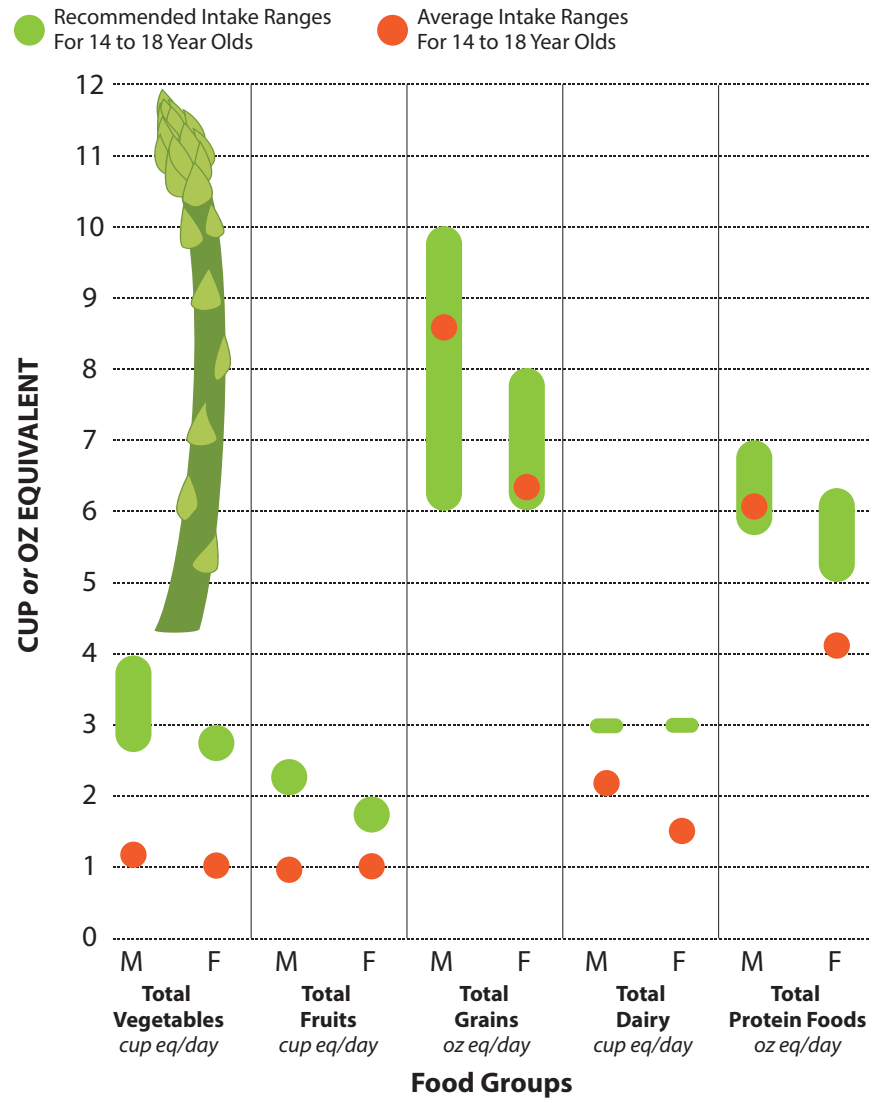
Nutrition for Body & Mind

Fuel for Learning & Powerful Play

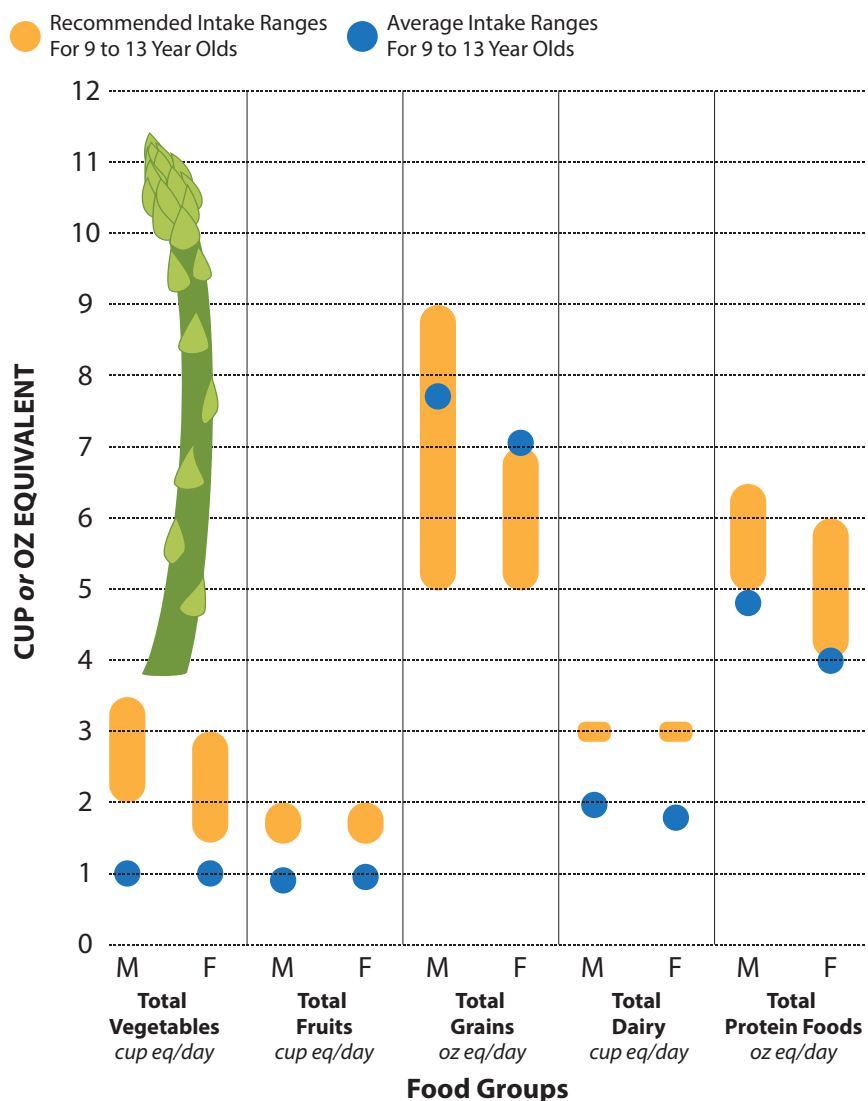
Current Intakes: Ages 5 Through 8



Current Intakes: Ages 14 Through 18



Current Intakes: Ages 9 Through 13



Asparagus is rich in Vitamin K, folate, and vitamins A and C. It contains asparagusic acid, which turns into sulfur compounds that can be smelled during urination for up to 12 hours after eating, but only about 60% of people can detect it. Can you?



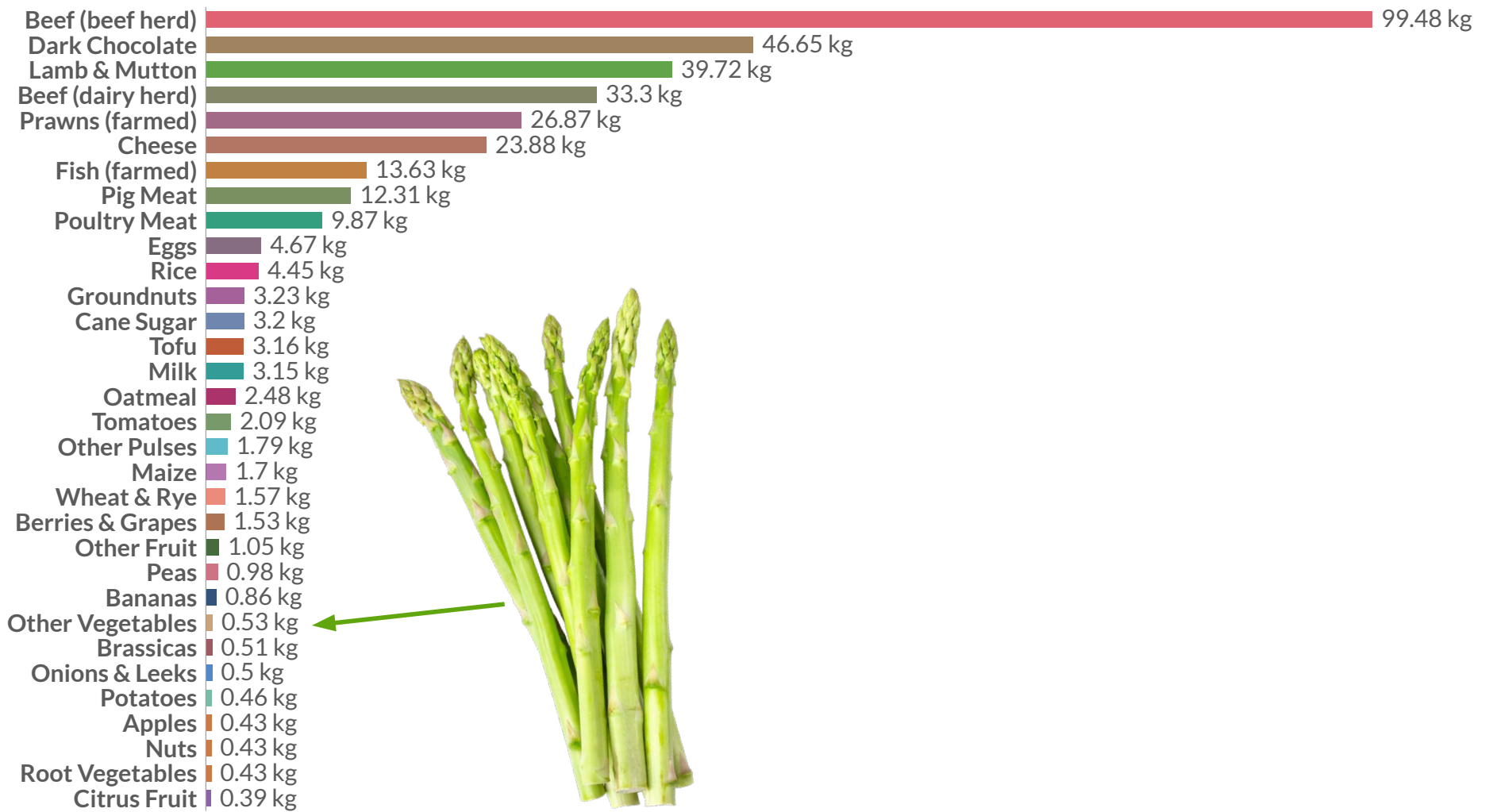
CLIMATE IMPACT OF ASPARAGUS

ONLY THOSE GROWN LOCALLY AND SEASONALLY

Greenhouse gas emissions per kilogram of food product

Our World
in Data

Greenhouse gas emissions¹ are measured in kilograms of carbon dioxide-equivalents². This means non-CO₂ gases are weighted by the amount of warming they cause over a 100-year timescale.



https://ourworldindata.org/environmental-impacts-of-food

Data source: Poore and Nemecek (2018)

OurWorldinData.org/environmental-impacts-of-food | CC BY

Eat asparagus from local farms and in season. Otherwise, transportation, if it's air freight, produces six times the amount of greenhouse gases than the next-highest vegetable, avocado. The USDA says that air-freighting takes 50 times the energy of shipping by sea, 33 times that of rail transport, and four times that of truck transport.

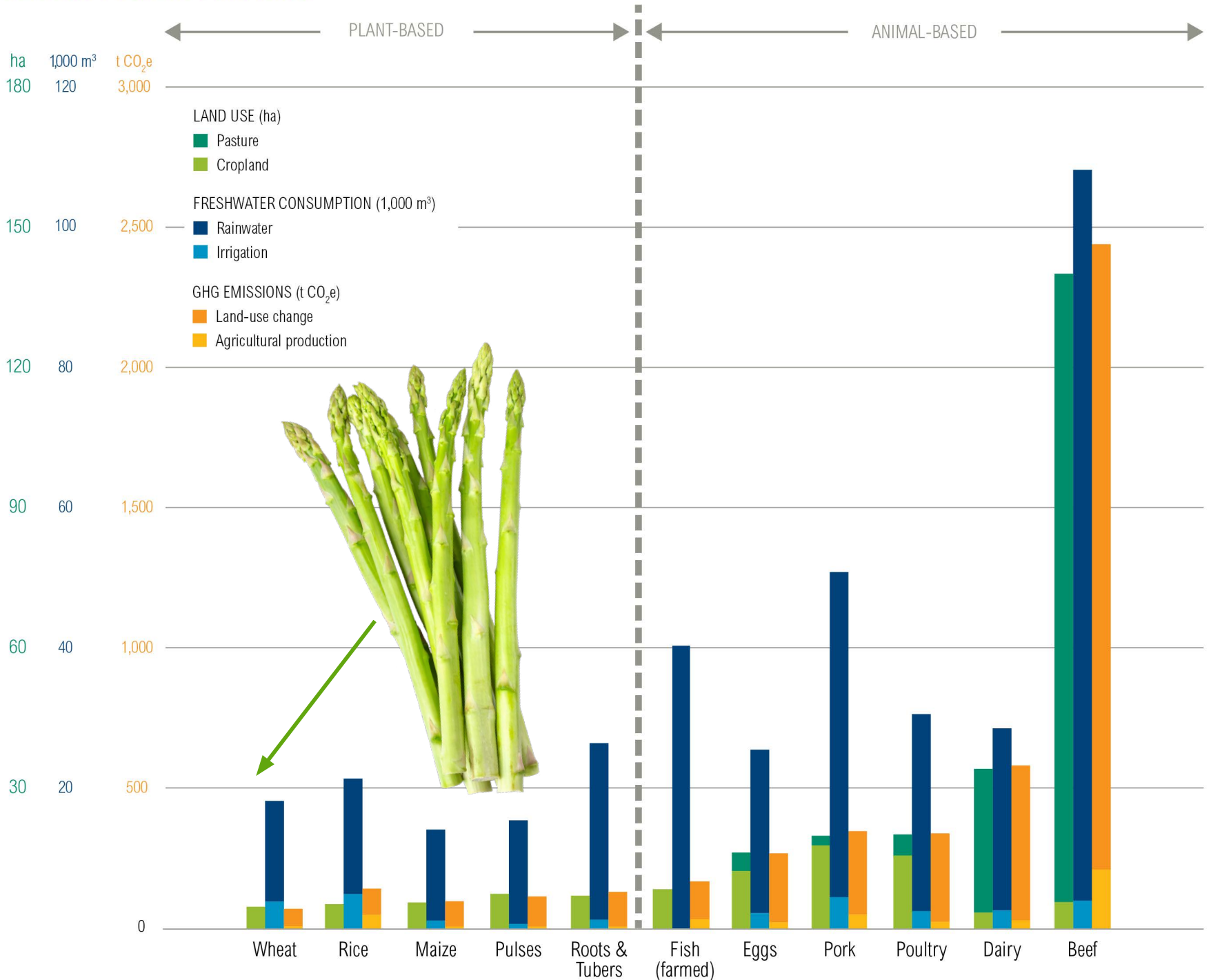


RESOURCE INTENSITY OF ASPARAGUS

ONLY THOSE GROWN LOCALLY AND SEASONALLY

Animal-Based Foods Are More Resource-Intensive than Plant-Based Foods

PER TON PROTEIN CONSUMED



wri.org/shiftingdiets

WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE

Eat asparagus from local farms and in season. Asparagus is a water-intensive crop, and though it is a perennial, it yields fewer edible pounds of food per acre than staple vegetables like potatoes or broccoli – so more land per serving.



Garden State on Your Plate

Asparagus Tasting

Begin with unseasoned raw or roasted asparagus (425 degrees for 5 minutes on a sheet pan). Then season with a pinch of salt. After observing how seasoning changes the flavor, taste with a drizzle of vinaigrette. If available, compare and contrast different methods of cooking beyond roasting: Steamed, boiled, sauteed, and with relevant flavorings.

This seasoning mix can be used to bathe vegetables before roasting, as a seasoning for braising or simmering, and for dressing salads of fresh greens.

Use a $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ ratio, acid to oil.

Vinaigrette

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup lemon juice

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup olive oil

1 garlic clove, crushed

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dijon mustard

Salt

Pepper

Place ingredients in a jar with a tight-fitting lid.
Shake to combine.
Store in refrigerator.



Credits

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Garden State on Your Plate is a K12 program that uses local produce, school cafeterias, campus lands, and student demographics to illustrate and amplify curriculum. The program, designed to elevate the everyday quality of school foods and to increase participation in the National School Lunch Program, was created in 2010 by the Princeton School Gardens Cooperative in partnership with Princeton Public Schools, and with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.



psgcoop.org