

Asparagus Cannelloni with Basil Alfredo Sauce

A hint of nutmeg and a sprinkling of fresh basil complement the asparagus in this vegetarian baked pasta dinner - great for spring entertaining.

Preparation Time: 50 minutes
Cooking Time: 35 to 45 minutes

1-½ lb (750 g) Ontario asparagus

Sauce:

⅓ cup (75 ml) butter or margarine
⅓ cup (75 ml) all-purpose flour
4 cups (1 L) 2% milk
1 cup (250 ml) shredded light Mozzarella or Fontina cheese
½ cup (125 ml) Parmesan cheese, grated
⅓ cup (75 ml) fresh Ontario basil, chopped (or 2 tbsp/25 ml dried)
½ tsp (2 ml) salt
¼ tsp (1 ml) pepper

Filling:

1 cup (250 ml) light Ricotta cheese
1 egg
½ cup (125 ml) Parmesan cheese, grated
2 tbsp (25 ml) dry bread crumbs
2 tbsp (25 ml) minced Ontario onion
¼ tsp (1 ml) nutmeg
½ tsp (2 ml) salt
16 oven-ready Cannelloni tubes

Garnish:

2 cups (500 ml) diced seeded Ontario greenhouse tomatoes
¼ cup (50 ml) sliced fresh Ontario basil (or 4 tsp/20 ml dried)

1. Break tough ends from asparagus; steam or cook in large skillet of boiling water for 2 minutes or just until crisp-tender. Rinse under cold running water; drain well and dry on towel. Cut off 2-inch (5 cm) tips and reserve for garnish; cut any thick stalks in half vertically. Thinly slice stalks crosswise and reserve for filling.
2. **Sauce:** In large saucepan, melt butter over medium-low heat; stir in flour and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute. Gradually whisk in milk; bring to boil over medium-high heat, whisking constantly. Reduce heat and cook for 2 minutes. Add mozzarella, ¼ cup (50 ml) of the Parmesan cheese, the basil, salt and pepper; cook, stirring until cheese has melted. Pour about 1 cup (250 ml) sauce into greased 9 x 13-inch (3 L) baking dish. Reserve remaining sauce.
3. **Filling:** In large bowl, combine ricotta cheese, egg, Parmesan cheese, bread crumbs, onion, nutmeg, salt and sliced asparagus stalks. Loosely fill cannelloni tubes and arrange

in single layer on sauce in baking dish. Pour reserved sauce over top, making sure cannelloni are completely covered. Cover and bake in 350°F (180°C) oven for 35 to 45 minutes or until bubbling. Sprinkle with remaining Parmesan cheese; broil until brown.

4. **Garnish:** Toss tomatoes with basil; sprinkle over each serving. *Serves 4.*

Tip: Add ½ cup (75 ml) fresh basil to 4 cups (1 L) prepared Alfredo sauce and substitute for the sauce above.

Nutritional Information Per Serving:

Protein: 47 g Fat: 40 g Carbohydrates: 62 g Calories: 796