

Asparagus Flan

Serves 6

- 2 lbs. Fresh asparagus, peeled and trimmed
- 2 Tbl. Heavy cream
- 2 Tbl. Minced fresh tarragon (use about 1 tsp. if using dried and pulverize in your hand as adding)
- ¼ c. Unsalted butter (½ stick), melted and cooled (plus extra for ramekins)
- ¼ c. Parmesan cheese, grated
- ½ tsp. Salt (or to taste) and fresh ground white pepper to taste
- 3 Large eggs at room temperature

Preheat oven to 350°. Butter six ¾ cup ramekins or custard cups. Line the bottom of each with rounds of parchment or waxed paper and then butter the paper. Line a baking dish large enough to hold all the ramekins with 2 layers of a kitchen towel. Set all of this aside.

Cut the tips off from each asparagus spear and cut in half lengthwise. Cut remaining stalks into 1" lengths. Steam tips, covered, until crisp tender, about 1 minute. Shock in cold water. Drain and pat dry. Steam the stalk, again until crisp tender, about 6-8 minutes, shock in cold water and pat dry. Reserve enough of the tips for garnish, about 3 for each cup. Put remainder of asparagus into a blender with cream, tarragon, butter, cheese, salt and pepper and process until smooth.

In a large bowl, whisk eggs until whites and yolks are well combined. Add the asparagus mixture in a slow stream, whisking constantly until everything is combined. Divide evenly among the prepared ramekins and place them in the baking pan on top of kitchen towels. Add enough hot water to the pan to reach halfway up the sides of the cups. Bake in the lower third of the oven for 35 to 40 minutes or just until a thin knife inserted in the center comes out clean. Remove from baking pan and cool on a rack for about 5 minutes. Run a thin knife around the edge of each ramekin and invert onto serving dish. Remove parchment paper and garnish with reserved asparagus tips.

Note: edible flowers also look nice as a garnish, alone or with the asparagus tips.