

Asparagus Soup

Serves 4

- 2 lb. Asparagus, trimmed and peeled if using thick stalks
- 1 lg. White or yellow onion, chopped
- 3 Tbl. Unsalted butter, divided
- 1-2 Garlic cloves, minced
- Salt and fresh ground pepper to taste
- 5-6 c. Chicken stock or vegetable stock if you wish to keep it vegetarian
- ½ c. Crème fraîche or heavy whipping cream or buttermilk
- ¼ tsp. Fresh lemon juice or dry vermouth (or to taste)

Cut the tips off 12 of the asparagus stalks 1 ½ inches from the top and set aside. Cut remaining asparagus in to ½ inch pieces. Melt 2 Tablespoons of butter in a 4 quart pot. Sauté the onion in the pot, stirring frequently over medium heat until soft but not brown. Add the asparagus, garlic, salt and pepper to taste. Continue to cook, stirring, for about 5 minutes. Add 5 c. stock, cover and simmer until asparagus is very tender, about 15 to 20 minutes. While asparagus is simmering, Boil reserved tips in salted water until just tender, about 3-4 minutes. Drain and immediately submerge in ice water to stop the cooking. Drain again, pat dry and reserve for garnish.

When asparagus in pot is done, purée in batches in a blender (don't fill the blender more than half full and keep a towel and your hand on the lid). Return to the pan (if you have an immersion blender, purée the asparagus directly in the pot). If you prefer a smoother soup, strain through a wire mesh. Stir in the cream and add more broth if you prefer a thinner soup. Check seasoning and correct if necessary. Bring soup to a boil, remove from heat and add remaining tablespoon of butter, the lemon juice or vermouth. Ladle into bowls and garnish each bowl with three of the reserved asparagus tips.

To prepare ahead, complete soup but do not add the last tablespoon of butter or the lemon or vermouth. Soup will keep, chilled, for 2 days. Bring to a boil and then add the butter and lemon.

Note: If dietary restrictions demand, substitute butter for olive oil and soft tofu for cream or buttermilk.