



Pan-Roasted Asparagus

Is it possible to get great grilled flavor from a simple stovetop recipe?

The Problem: We love the great flavor of grilled asparagus, but sometimes inclement weather keeps us indoors. Broilers can be a finicky alternative to the grill, but so can our second indoor option, the stovetop, which too often produces limp, greasy, shriveled spears.

The Goal: We wanted to develop a simple stovetop cooking method that would deliver crisp, evenly browned spears without all the fuss of having to rotate each spear individually.

The Solution: Along with the oil and asparagus, we added just a little butter to the skillet. After we covered the pan, water evaporating from the butter began steaming the asparagus, which, in turn, released enough additional moisture to finish cooking the spears to a bright green and crisp-tender stage. But we still needed to brown them before they overcooked. When we found that tasters preferred the flavor of spears browned on only one side, we realized that we could limit the additional cooking time. Our half-browned spears never had a chance to go limp.

Pan-Roasted Asparagus

This recipe works best with asparagus that is at least 1/2 inch thick near the base. If using thinner spears, reduce the covered cooking time to 3 minute and the uncovered cooking time to 5 minutes. Do not use pencil-thin asparagus; it cannot withstand the heat and overcooks too easily.

Serves 3 to 4

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 2 pounds thick asparagus spears (*see note*), ends trimmed
- kosher salt and ground black pepper
- 1/2 lemon (*optional*)

1. Heat oil and butter in 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat. When butter has melted, add half of asparagus to skillet with tips pointed in one direction; add remaining spears with tips pointed in one direction. Using tongs, distribute spears in even layer (spears will not quite fit into single layer); cover and cook until asparagus is bright green and still crisp, about 5 minutes.

2. Uncover and increase heat to high; season asparagus with salt and pepper. Cook until spears are tender and well browned along one side, 5 to 7 minutes, using tongs to occasionally move spears from center of pan to edge of pan to ensure all are browned. Transfer asparagus to serving dish, adjust seasonings with salt and pepper, and, if desired, squeeze lemon half over spears. Serve immediately.

Pan-Roasted Asparagus with Toasted Garlic and Parmesan

This recipe works best with asparagus that is at least 1/2 inch thick near the base. If using thinner spears, reduce the covered cooking time to 3 minute and the uncovered cooking time to 5 minutes. Do not use pencil-thin asparagus