



Chapter Two

RED WINE POACHED EGG, ASPARAGUS, AND MUSHROOMS



Gordon Ramsay Teaches Cooking II: Restaurant Recipes at Home

RED WINE POACHED EGG, ASPARAGUS, AND MUSHROOMS

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A poached egg [is] that final royal coating across the asparagus that just takes this dish to its zenith.

How to “feel for the asparagus”

Starting from the bottom of the spear, run your knife edge over the top of the stem feeling for when it gives away easily to the knife—that’s where you’ll make your cut, about 2 inches from the bottom. Although you don’t want to eat them as-is, the stems are full of flavor and great for stocks.

Once you’ve taken off the woody parts, you’ll trim another inch or so off the bottom of each asparagus spear for use in the purée. The tips of the asparagus are the sweetest part of the vegetable, so you’ll sauté those, and use the bottom parts in the purée.

Chapter Review

Asparagus are often steamed or boiled, leaving all of their flavor in the cooking liquid. Gordon prefers to “starve them of water” to intensify their flavor. He blisters them in a hot cast-iron pan and leaves the flavorful skins intact. The woody stems still need to be removed through the process of “feeling for the asparagus.”

Gordon likes the contrast between white and green asparagus in this dish. The white is more naturally sweet with a creamy texture and the green is more earthy and bright. But white asparagus has a very short season of seven to eight weeks; if you can’t find it, simply use all green asparagus.

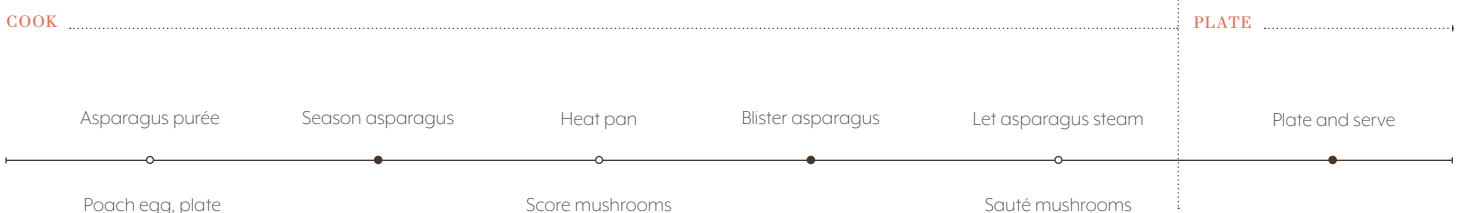
The sweetness of the purée comes from gently sweating the asparagus and aromatics. Gordon uses shallots over white onion because they have a more mellow flavor and won’t overpower the flavor of the asparagus. Browned garlic and onions will change the color of the purée and browned asparagus can end up tasting bitter, so take your time sweating the vegetables.

Gordon calls trumpet mushrooms the “cheap porcini”—full of flavor, but not as expensive. Scoring the mushrooms helps keep the centers from getting spongy. Always lay ingredients into hot oil away from you so that the oil doesn’t spray toward you. Get color on the mushrooms before you turn them. Browning means that the water has had time to cook off, intensifying the mushroom flavor.

Poaching the egg in red wine flavors the wine, and the seasoned wine can be used to poach over and over again. Pass the liquid through a sieve and store in the refrigerator for up to a week. There’s no need to use expensive wine, a house red is fine. Gordon uses room temperature eggs because cold eggs right out of the fridge create a denser yolk and he’s looking for a silky yolk to coat the asparagus.

When Gordon plates the dish, notice how he uses one hand to hold the bottle of purée and the other to steady his hand for precise movement.

RECIPE TIMELINE



RED WINE POACHED EGG, ASPARAGUS, AND MUSHROOMS

*Prep*

- If you choose to make your own vegetable stock for this dish, it can be made ahead of time, refrigerated for up to five days, and frozen for up to a month.

Ingredient Notes

- Green asparagus is harvested from February to June in the US. It can sometimes be found year-round but the quality is not always as good. If you have asparagus that is lacking color, especially when puréed, just add a handful of blanched spinach a little at a time to brighten the purée to deep green.
- If you use store-bought stock, make sure it is unsalted so that you have control over the seasoning in the dish.
- Room temperature eggs are the best to poach with because they won't drastically lower the temperature of the poaching liquid. Gordon uses brown eggs in this dish but white eggs can be used as well.
- White asparagus is generally found in the US from April to June. It is the same as green asparagus but grown without sunlight and the flavor is slightly sweeter. If you can't find the white variety, use all green.
- Cremini mushrooms can be substituted for trumpet mushrooms.
- If you cannot find lemon thyme, use regular thyme mixed with the zest from half a lemon.
- Meyer lemons are a Chinese citrus hybrid of a lemon and a mandarin orange, so they are sweeter than a regular lemon with a floral aroma. If you can't find them, regular lemons are an equal substitute.

Red Wine Poached Egg, Sautéed Asparagus, and Purée With King Trumpet Mushrooms

Serves 4

Lemon Salt

3 Meyer lemons
3 tablespoons Maldon salt

Zest Meyer lemons into a mortar and pestle and add Maldon salt. Crush the zest and salt together until fragrant and broken down. Store in an airtight container, in a plastic or ceramic container wrapped tightly with plastic wrap, or a ziplock bag in a cool, dry place for up to two weeks.

Sautéed Asparagus

1 bunch thick green asparagus
1 bunch white asparagus
Fresh, coarsely ground black pepper to taste
Lemon salt to taste
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 cup vegetable stock

Trim the woody ends off all of the bunches of white and green asparagus and set aside for stock. Then cut about 1/2 inch's worth of thin slices off the remaining asparagus starting from the trimmed end. Slice until both the white and green asparagus spears reach about 5 inches long. Reserve thin slices for asparagus purée.

Heat a large cast-iron pan over medium-high heat. Season the asparagus spears liberally with black pepper and lemon salt. Add olive oil into the hot pan and let it start to smoke. Add the asparagus spears in an even layer along with any remaining seasoning from the tray. Sauté for 90 seconds or until the green of the asparagus brightens and the white begins to char. Flip the spears, add the butter, and shake the pan so the butter can melt to the bottom of the pan. Let the butter brown and the asparagus spears char for another 90 seconds.

Deglaze the pan with vegetable stock. Turn off the heat and place a folded piece of aluminum foil on top of the asparagus to steam for 2 to 5 minutes. Check for doneness with the edge of your knife. If you feel resistance, let the asparagus simmer on low heat for another 2 minutes. If your knife slides through the asparagus fairly easy, remove from heat and reserve for plating.

Red Wine Poached Egg, Sautéed Asparagus, and Purée With King Trumpet Mushrooms

Serves 4

Green Asparagus Purée

Scraps from the trimmed green and white asparagus
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cubed
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 tablespoons shallot, small dice or brunoise
1 garlic clove, chopped
4 sprigs lemon thyme, leaves picked
1 to 1½ cups vegetable stock
4 tablespoons heavy cream
Maldon salt and fresh cracked black pepper to taste

Melt the butter in a large, shallow saucepan over medium-low heat. Add shallots and garlic with a tablespoon of olive oil and sauté for 3 minutes or until translucent and slightly tender. Do not get any color on the shallots and garlic. Add asparagus slices, season with two pinches of salt, a dash of pepper, and lemon thyme. Stir together with a wooden spoon and sauté for another 3 to 5 minutes or until the asparagus is softened. Be sure not to get any color on the asparagus. The green asparagus should have a vibrant green color—if it starts to gray it is overcooked.

Deglaze the pan with enough vegetable stock to submerge the cooked vegetables and let the liquid come to a simmer. Turn the heat off, cover with a lid, and let rest for 2½ minutes. The asparagus should be soft when pinched between your thumb and finger and tender to the bite.

Remove the lid and bring the heat back to medium. Add the cream and bring to a boil for 1 to 2 minutes. The purée will separate if the cream is cold when blending. Taste and season with more salt as needed.

Transfer asparagus mixture to blender. If you still have a decent amount of cooking liquid in the pan, do not pour all of it in to the blender. Reserve to begin and add as needed or you may end up with soup instead. Start blending on low speed, then gradually increase to medium and blend for 1 minute to emulsify all of the ingredients. The purée should be silky smooth and hold to the spoon when scooped. Taste and season with more salt as needed.

If your purée is not coming together, add a few tablespoons of the reserved cooking liquid to the blender to thin it out. If you don't have extra cooking liquid, use vegetable stock instead. Cool down slightly and pour into an 8-ounce squeeze bottle.

Red Wine Poached Egg, Sautéed Asparagus, and Purée With King Trumpet Mushrooms

Serves 4

King Trumpet Mushrooms

8 king trumpet mushrooms
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 garlic cloves, crushed
½ bunch thyme sprigs
Maldon salt and fresh cracked black pepper to taste

Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Slice the trumpet mushrooms in half lengthwise. Use the tip of a paring knife to score the cut side of the mushrooms on the bias moving diagonally across the flesh. Repeat the process again in the opposite direction to create a crosshatch pattern.

Place mushrooms cut side down in the sauté pan and cook for 3 to 5 minutes or until the scored side starts to become golden-brown. The mushrooms will have absorbed all of the oil so add the remaining olive oil to the pan and flip the mushrooms over. Add garlic and thyme sprigs and cook until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Drain the mushrooms on a plate lined with paper towels.

Red Wine Poached Egg

1½ quarts red wine (like cabernet sauvignon or Burgundy-style red)
4 large eggs, at room temperature
1 tablespoon Maldon salt
2 teaspoons cracked black pepper
4 garlic cloves, crushed
6 thyme sprigs
2 bay leaves, dried or fresh

In a medium saucepan over medium heat, bring red wine, bay leaves, and crushed garlic to a rolling boil. Crack an egg into a small glass bowl. To poach, use a whisk to create a whirlpool in the center of the simmering wine, then carefully spill the egg into the center of the whirlpool. Poach until whites are firm and the yolk is just starting to set, about 2 to 2 ½ minutes. Make sure the wine stays at a rolling boil. If it starts turning into a rapid boil, turn the heat down a notch, and if the wine stops boiling, turn the heat up a notch.

To test for doneness, remove the egg from the wine with a slotted spoon and lift it high enough for you to examine the egg. If the egg flattens itself out on the spoon it is still raw in the center and you'll need to place the egg back into the simmering wine for another minute. If the egg holds a domed shape on the spoon and feels slightly soft under your finger it is done. If the egg holds a tight, firm domed shape it is overcooked. Using a slotted spoon, transfer eggs to a plate lined with napkins to absorb the excess poaching liquid. Repeat the poaching process for the remaining eggs. The red wine poaching liquid can be strained, refrigerated, and reused 2 to 3 more times.

Red Wine Poached Egg, Sautéed Asparagus, and Purée With King Trumpet Mushrooms

Serves 4

Plate + Garnish

Lemon salt

Lay 3 to 5 of both colors of sautéed asparagus in the center of the plate in a V shape so the ends meet together at the bottom and the spear tops point to the top of the plate. Place the mushrooms on and around the asparagus with a random feel. Squeeze several dots of the asparagus purée around the edge of the plate. Finish by placing the poached egg on top of the bunched end of the sautéed asparagus and lightly season with lemon salt.

RED WINE POACHED EGG, ASPARAGUS, AND MUSHROOMS



INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon elderflower cordial

2½ tablespoons Martini Ambrato

½ teaspoon of grapefruit bitters

1 bottle of lemon tonic water

1 to 2 cups of ice cubes (depending on glass size)

2 to 3 slices of dehydrated or fresh grapefruit, to garnish

METHOD

1. Add a generous amount of ice cubes into a wine glass.
2. Add all the liquid ingredients into the glass.
3. Stir all together and garnish with dehydrated or fresh grapefruit slices.

Take It Further

- Begin a tasting notebook that you will use throughout the class. For your first entry, start learning about your palate by recording where and how greatly you adjusted the seasoning of the dish. Record any ideas about where the dish might fit into a three-course meal or any concept that you want to research or practice further. Keep up this practice as you make each dish.
- The finished purée is only one step away from being made into a beautiful asparagus soup. Practice sweating asparagus and making a purée, and then adding vegetable stock to take your purée into a soup. You can also use this technique with other vegetables like parsnips, carrots, broccoli, or butternut squash.
- Use the leftover woody stems to make a simple asparagus stock to build out a spring vegetable risotto. Follow Gordon's recipe on the following pages.
- Try making your own vegetable stock by adding equal parts carrots, celery, and onions to water. The amount of water should double the volume of vegetables. Add fresh parsley and thyme. Simmer and cook for about an hour. Then, strain and chill the stock rapidly and store in plastic quart containers for easy use.

Beverage Pairing

- Gordon recommends you pair this dish with a light, refreshing cocktail like his Street Spritz, following the recipe on the left.