

# Natural Health News

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EVERGREEN SPA & WELLNESS  
ELY, MN

## NUTRITIONAL STARS OF SPRING

Sonja Jewell

NTS, CMT, CCWFN

Evergreen Cottage  
146 E. Chapman

Ely, MN 55731

Phone: 218-365-2288

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Spring is a time for renewal. Nature provides us with a variety of nutritious foods that deserve a prominent place on your dinner table during this special time of the year. One of them is **ASPARAGUS**. Fresh stalks are plentiful in the spring and they are a nutrient-dense super-food. Asparagus has potent diuretic properties and helps to regulate glandular disorders and kidney dysfunction. It neutralizes excess ammonia in the body, a condition that causes lethargy and sexual dysfunction; aids in the health of the prostate gland; inhibits the development of cataracts; eliminates toxins from the liver; and is good for people with kidney disorders. The high amounts of carotene, vitamin C, and selenium make this vegetable excellent for cancer treatment. Fresh asparagus is a good source of rutin, a substance that prevents small blood vessels from breaking. Medieval medicine valued asparagus for the treatment of heart palpitations and as a diuretic. Asparagus is high in carotenoids, B complex, vitamin C and E as well as potassium, iodine and zinc. If you have a history of gout, consume asparagus in moderation only. It contains purines, compounds that can trigger gout attacks in susceptible individuals. Look for bright-green spears that are firm. The tips should be compact and have a slightly purplish color. Asparagus deteriorates quickly unless it is kept cold. To store it, trim a 1/4 inch off the lower end of the stalks, and wrap the stalks in a moist paper towel and store in the crisper compartment of the refrigerator. Or stand the trimmed, wrapped stalks in an inch of water—they will keep up to three days. To prepare asparagus, wash the spears under cool running water. If asparagus is of large diameter, you may want to cut off about an inch of green from the ends. Place in a vegetable steamer and steam about 5 minutes until stalks turn bright green and can be pierced easily with a fork. Don't overcook! Transfer to a heated serving dish, place a generous amount of butter on top and finish with a squeeze of lemon juice and/or chopped fresh herbs. Asparagus also tastes wonderful grilled or roasted in the oven, can be added to soups, casseroles and salads. Another power food which is readily available this time of the year is **WATERCRESS**. Hippocrates is said to have picked the leafy green from the streams flowing by his hospital and served it to his patients as a blood purifier. It has a unique spicy flavor and is brimming with nutrition. Watercress contains the antioxidant-duo lutein and zeaxanthin, which may help protect against macular degeneration. It also packs in beta-carotene: Once converted by the body to vitamin A, this nutrient safeguards vision, aids cell regeneration, and helps regulate the immune system. Watercress has its fair share of vitamins and minerals, too. One cup of watercress provides nearly the daily requirement of the very important vitamin K, which assists with healthy blood clotting and building bones. The spiciness in watercress comes from sulfur-containing phytonutrients. Studies suggest these compounds can help reduce DNA damage and display powerful anti-cancer properties. It makes an excellent addition to everything from soups and salads to stir-fries and sandwiches. Look for healthy, green leaves and sniff for a fresh, spicy scent. When home, store in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. If you have a cool, clean creek or stream nearby, you can grow watercress yourself; its roots naturalize easily in shallow water. If you don't, plant seedlings in a small pot and set it in a plastic tray. Place in a semi-shaded area and keep the tray filled with clean water.

## RECIPES FOR SPRING RENEWAL

**WATERCRESS SOUP:** In a medium saucepan heat 1 TBSP. olive oil and add 3 garlic cloves (thinly sliced) and cook until fragrant. Stir in 2 cups potatoes (peeled and cut into 1/2-inch dice) and 1/2 tsp. salt. Cook 1 minute. Add 3 cups chicken stock and 1 1/2 cups of water and bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook for 5 minutes. Stir in 2 bunches (14 oz.) watercress (coarsely chopped). Return to a boil. Reduce to a simmer for 1 minute. Season with salt and pepper. Ladle soup into bowls and squeeze a lemon wedge into each bowl. Enjoy!

**ASPARAGUS WITH SESAME SEEDS:** Place 2 TBSP. olive oil in a glass baking dish. Add 2 1/2 pounds trimmed asparagus and toss with the oil so that the asparagus is completely coated. Bake at 400 degrees for about 8 minutes or so. Sprinkle the asparagus with 2 TBSP. minced shallots and 2 TBSP. sesame seeds and bake for a few more minutes. Transfer to a heated serving bowl and squeeze on juice from 1 lemon. Season to taste.

**ASPARAGUS SALAD TOPPED WITH POACHED EGGS:** Makes 4 servings. This salad is satisfying yet light, making it a nice option for lunch, brunch or even dinner with some crusty bread. Preheat oven to 450 degrees F. Toss 2 bunches (1 lb. each—trimmed) asparagus with 2 tsp. oil and salt and pepper in a large bowl. Transfer to a rimmed baking sheet and roast, stirring once, until very tender, about 15 minutes. Meanwhile, whisk 2 TBSP. olive oil, salt, pepper, 1/2 tsp. fresh lemon zest, 2 TBSP. lemon juice, 1 TBSP. minced shallot and 1/4 tsp. dry mustard in a bowl. Set aside 4 teaspoons of the dressing in a small bowl. When the asparagus is done, set aside to cool while you poach 4 large eggs (egg yolks should still be a little runny). When eggs are finished, toss about 10 cups arugula with the dressing in the large bowl. Divide the salad among 4 plates. Top with asparagus and a poached egg and drizzle with 1 teaspoon of the reserved dressing. Garnish with thinly shaved Parmesan cheese.

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“He who has health has hope,  
and he who has hope has everything.”

~ ARABIAN PROVERB

## SPRING GREENS SMOOTHIE

Blend the following ingredients in a blender until smooth. Add more milk or a little water for desired consistency.

- 1 small handful spinach
- 1 small handful spring bitters (dandelion, arugula, mache, etc....)
- 1 cup rice milk
- 1 scoop brown rice protein powder
- 1- 2 teaspoons spirulina
- 1 Tablespoons Flaxseeds
- 1- 2 Tablespoons fresh mint leaves

