



PRESS RELEASE

Forget the hollandaise sauce and the new potatoes: Try these exciting new asparagus combinations

Lucerne / Interlaken / Bern / Zurich, 14.04.2011 (IB) – The history of asparagus dates back to well before the birth of Christ, and yet it is rare nowadays to see this finest of vegetables served in truly exciting combinations. But there's more to these delicate white or green stems than simply serving them with sauce hollandaise and potatoes. The head chefs at the four five-star hotels of the Victoria-Jungfrau Collection in Lucerne, Zurich, Bern and Interlaken have chosen to reveal some of their asparagus secrets, with something completely different for diners to enjoy at home, too.

On March 1 **Kerstin Rischmeyer** officially took over as head chef at the Michelin award-winning restaurant Jasper at the Palace Luzern. Her recipe combines fried Danube asparagus with Mumbai curry ice-cream and turbot confit. "I always use Danube asparagus or Bruchsal asparagus because I find it has the best flavour," says the 39-year-old professional chef. "Most people tend to blanch asparagus in water because they're afraid of frying it and doing something wrong. And yet it's so simple." Kerstin Rischmeyer recommends peeling the asparagus first, then slicing it, and frying it gently in a pan with a little oil. Then add a little butter, salt and sugar. "That way the asparagus is able to release all its wonderful flavour," says the German-born chef. The turbot is also cooked in olive oil at a temperature of 70 °C, slow-cooked to ensure the fish remains juicy. "I chose Mumbai curry because it is mild and has a nice fragrant taste," explains Kerstin Rischmeyer. "As ice cream it creates an exciting contrast with the warm asparagus and the fish." Her Mumbai curry ice-cream is easy to make at home using a household ice-cream maker and simply adding milk and sugar to the Indian spice.

Her colleague **Denis Schmitt** at the Eden au Lac in Zurich serves his asparagus not spicy, but in an unusually sweet combination and, even more unusually, as a jam. "I love rice pudding with green asparagus jam and strawberry salad," says the Alsace-born chef, who currently holds 15 GaultMillau points. "You can serve it as a dessert or as a tasty little snack on a hot summer's day." For the rice pudding he heats half a litre of milk with 40 g of sugar and then adds 125 g of risotto rice. He then cooks the rice mixture on a low heat for 20 minutes before adding two tablespoons of mascarpone once it has cooled. The asparagus jam, his own creation, is probably the easiest part of the summer dish to prepare. "Peel 200 g of green asparagus, cut into small pieces, then cook slowly with 75 g of sugar," explains Schmitt. The strawberry salad is

seasoned with a little sugar and olive oil and Modena balsamic vinegar. “If you don’t have any strawberries to hand, you can use the asparagus jam to whisk into a *crème Chantilly*,” says Denis Schmitt. “Simply whip 100 ml of double cream and add a tablespoon of the green jam. It really looks very nice on the table, especially if you serve it in a glass dish.”

By contrast **Lukas Stalder**, head chef at the 16 GaultMillau Restaurant La Terrasse at the Victoria-Jungfrau Grand Hotel & Spa in Interlaken, favours the white variety of asparagus. For his Asian and caramelised version he first peels the asparagus and then cuts it diagonally into lozenge shapes. Next he dry-roasts a few cashew nuts and sesame seeds in a non-stick pan, without adding any oil. “In the same pan I then caramelize a little sugar until it is light brown in colour,” explains Stalder. “Then I add the pieces of asparagus and fry them briefly at a high temperature.” The professional’s trick comes next. Add a splash of fresh orange juice, then immediately take the asparagus out of the pan and leave it to cool. It is then marinated in salt, balsamic, olive oil and sesame oil. The Asian touch is down to the finely cut basil and coriander. “These herbs are then thoroughly mixed in with the asparagus, the cashew nuts, the sesame and the orange zests, i.e. the wafer-thin strips from the orange peel.”

While an amateur chef does not have to go far to find an orange; the same cannot be said of the citron variety known as “Buddha’s hand”, which **Gregor Zimmermann** at the Bellevue Palace in Bern likes to combine with asparagus. “This rare fruit can be found at Asian grocers or hypermarkets,” explains the head chef. “Basically it’s a lemon without the pulp.” His secret recipe, i.e. wild asparagus marinated with “Buddha’s hand” citron and açai berry fruit served with foie gras, is guaranteed to wow gourmets at home, too. “You can buy açai fruit either frozen or as fruit pulp in health food stores or delicatessens,” says Zimmermann. For this dish the wild asparagus is briefly blanched in salted water. The “Buddha’s hand” citron is used to make a separate *gremolata* for the asparagus by first sautéing it with shallots and then adding a few breadcrumbs. Next, season with a little lemon juice and a pinch of salt and pepper. “The açai fruit pulp is simply mixed with sesame oil, vinegar, a little salt and pepper, and then used to marinate the asparagus,” adds Zimmermann. “In other words it sounds more complicated than it actually is.”

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