

Spring ahead with spring vegetables

March 14 2019, by Len Canter, Healthday Reporter



(HealthDay)—Celebrate spring with farm-fresh foods that usher in the season—[asparagus](#), [peas](#) and [watercress](#). They're low in calories, have fresh flavor and are the perfect way to energize for warmer weather.

Asparagus is the quintessential spring vegetable, high in iron, folate and vitamins K and A. Quick to cook and easy to pair with flavorful ingredients, [asparagus](#) can be a tasty side dish or the starring ingredient in a risotto or [pasta](#) main course.

Asparagus is also great for digestive health, because it's a pre-biotic, meaning it feeds the helpful bacteria that live in your gut. These good bacteria are responsible for everything from signaling your [immune system](#) and keeping digestion in check to producing vital B vitamins. When shopping for asparagus, look for spears that are free of blemishes and dry spots, and tips that are closed and firm. Use asparagus promptly—it can spoil quickly.

Peas are high in fiber, vitamins C, K and B, and are easy to incorporate into many dishes. Watercress is a crunchy green with [vitamin C](#), [beta carotene](#), lutein, zeaxanthin and some B vitamins. It adds a peppery flavor to dishes and salads. Here's a twist on a classic spring dish that showcases all these veggies and is deliciously creamy.

Lighter Pasta Primavera

- 4 ounces whole-grain pasta
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 6 asparagus spears
- 1 small bunch of watercress, chopped
- 1 cup green peas or sugar snap peas, sliced
- Pinch of salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cayenne (optional)
- 1 tablespoon cream cheese
- 5-ounce container of plain Greek yogurt
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Cook the pasta according to package directions and set aside.

Trim off the tough ends of the asparagus and slice spears on the diagonal, making 3-inch sections.

Warm a large skillet and add the oil. As soon as the oil shimmers, add peas, asparagus and watercress along with the salt and cayenne, if desired. Cook vegetables two to three minutes until soft. Add the pasta to the pan and toss.

Turn heat to low. Stir in cream cheese and yogurt, tossing well to coat vegetables and pasta. Sprinkle on the Parmesan. Serve immediately.

Yield: 2 servings

More information: The website Fruits & Veggies More Matters details [many produce choices](#) in season in the spring.

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