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Spring Asparagus

By Susie Iventosch

When it comes to asparagus, I really enjoy the pencil-thin stalks that seem to shout out “spring is here at long last” as they appear in the markets. They barely need any cooking at all, and are quite delicious when still crunchy. In fact, when steaming them, I usually just bring the water to a boil and quickly turn it off, leaving the asparagus to steam

off the heat because they can so easily be overcooked.

This recipe calls for little tiny bites of the raw asparagus, cut into 1/8-inch slices, and tossed into the cooked (and drained) pasta just to take the chill off, before adding the rest of the ingredients. It is such a fresh-tasting recipe with raw asparagus and basil, and yet, with the

minced pistachios and fresh grated Parmesan, it is hearty enough to serve as the main course.

If you find you don't have time to shell the pistachios, try pine nuts, or walnuts. Or better yet, go pick up a bag of already shelled pistachios at Trader Joe's! Pesto is super-easy to make, and is so good when made fresh to go along with this dish. Enjoy!

Piccolini Penne Pasta with Pistachio Pesto and Spring Asparagus

Ingredients

- 1 pound piccolini penne pasta
- 1 bunch fresh basil leaves, stems removed
- 1/2 cup shelled pistachios
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 4-5 ounces Parmesan cheese (split-half grated for garnish and half cut into small pieces for pesto)
- 2 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 pound skinny spring asparagus, thinly sliced



Piccolini Penne with Pistachio Pesto and Spring Asparagus. Photo Susie Iventosch

Directions

Place shelled pistachios in a food processor and process until finely chopped. Add garlic, basil and the Parmesan cut into small pieces and process again. Finally, add olive oil and pulse just until integrated. Set aside.
 Cut asparagus into very thin (1/8-inch) slices. Set aside.
 Cook pasta to al dente in large pot. Strain out water and return pasta to warm cooking pot. Add sliced asparagus and stir well. Cover for just about two minutes, to slightly warm asparagus. Then mix in all but 1/4 cup of the pesto and serve at once. Pass extra Parmesan at the table. Serve with toasted French bread, topped with extra pesto and tomato slices.

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Susie Iventosch is the author of Tax Bites and Tasty Morsels, which can be found at Across the Way in Moraga, www.amazon.com, and ww.taxbites.net. Susie can be reached at suziven@gmail.com. **These recipes are available on our web site.**
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Fate Brings War Hero to Lafayette

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The upshot of her introduction and subsequent meetings is a special invitation for him to come to Lamorinda for a fundraising event to benefit the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation. At 94, Zamperini might have said “no” for any number of reasons, but he agreed to fly up from Southern California for the event next week.

In January of this year Karen and Tom Mulvaney were on vacation in Kauai to celebrate Tom and his twin's birthday. Although she's usually healthy, Karen got quite sick and ended up spending most of her time in bed reading “Unbroken - A World War II story of survival, resilience, and redemption.”

“The book was like a talisman - I carried it everywhere with me for weeks” said Mulvaney. “I felt like my father's memory had been stirred and his voice reawakened.” In what can only be described as an extraordinarily rare coincidence, the book outlines the many struggles of Zamperini that paralleled her father's journey. It was haunting - her father was a fighter pilot during World War II who was shot out of the sky, but ejected and lived, was captured by the Germans and was a POW in Germany. Both men had war experiences that left wounds.

In yet another twist of fate, Kauai was where Zamperini learned to fly. Mulvaney explained that it seemed strange to her, being bed-bound and reflecting on the story of Louie's time lost at sea. Being ill gave her time to not only read the book but also to ponder the struggles of her

father and Zamperini and the complicated consequences of their war experiences. “I ended up being extremely grateful to have been sick in Kauai.”

Because she was so moved by the story - she ordered a number of books and had them signed by Zamperini, who inscribed, “Be Hardy!” Thus started a unique relationship between the two; that led to a phone conversation, lunch and his acceptance of this speaking engagement. Mulvaney calls it a “powerful connection.”

“To me, Louis' story is a life raft for others,” said Mulvaney explaining the many lessons to be gleaned from it: “everybody struggles; nobody's life is entirely smooth. Louie's ability to forgive even the most brutal treatment by others is a lesson for all. His life-changing experiences and how he overcame them helped me understand my dad better,” adding that she learned to, “embrace opportunities when I can. My hope is that Louie's story will live on and help others with their own struggles.”

It will certainly live on in the phenomenal number of books sold and in this appearance in Lafayette. Mulvaney was so moved, she underwrote the cost of his speaking fee and travel arrangements, no small undertaking. “I wanted more people to have the opportunity to meet him - I wanted to give that as a gift.” Turns out the date that is available, April 17, is the day after what would have been her dad's 88th birthday. The event, at Acalanes High School, is already sold out.

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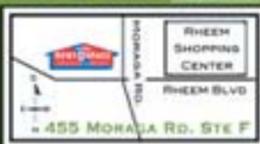
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