



In the Kitchen with Mari

Asparagus with a Port Aioli

From September, 2010 Letter from Mari

Created by Orford Festival leader, Jean François Rivest

Jean Francois Rivest, the conductor and great chef in Orford. gave me a home-style recipe for a distinctive asparagus dipping sauce. He served it as part of a lunch he hosted for us at his summer home on his terrace overlooking Lake Orford. It was interesting to see how he executed such an elegant lunch in the middle of his workday. It included chilled asparagus, duck, and a fine selection of cheeses and chocolates, and served with a beautiful wine. It was perfect for a hot summer day.

I thought the French-Canadian sensibility of the asparagus dish would be fun for my friends in other countries. For me, it is an easy way to have an elegant and healthy appetizer-style snack because I can prepare it the morning of an event and have it ready-to-go when guests arrive.

Here is how he described it to me.

Ingredients:

- 60% mayonnaise (good quality, even better if it is home-made)
- 40% port wine (preferably something like late bottle vintage but it shouldn't be a very costly vintage)
- Some garlic, chopped fine (about 1 teaspoon)
- Ginger (about 1 teaspoon)
- Asparagus (large stalks)

Method:

Mix the above ingredients.
Add a pinch of Fleur de Sel (or your preferred salt)



and fresh-ground black pepper only just before serving.

Steam asparagus lightly, dip in cold water before the asparagus has finished cooking.

Dry and seal in plastic in the refrigerator until just before it is served.

Serve with warm baguette, to which the guests can add butter. *

Jean Francois also recommends this dish with Chablis.

*The butter was yet-another highlight of the lunch. He used a delicious French butter, Beurre de Bretagne, which he keeps preserved using an upside down butter dish that includes water to keep out the air and therefore preserves the as it would be in the refrigerator, even on a hot day.