

Penne with asparagus

SERVES 4 AS AN ACCOMPANIMENT

Penne are the quill-shaped pasta, exactly the same thickness as asparagus. Here, the asparagus are cut on the diagonal so they are identical in size to the pasta. A stir-fried mixture of the short spears with peanut oil, garlic, and spring onions forms the sauce for the pasta.

- ½ pound asparagus
- 3 tablespoons peanut oil
- 2 cloves garlic, very finely chopped
- 4 spring onions (scallions), trimmed and very finely chopped
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 cups penne
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

Snap the hard ends off the asparagus. Cut the spears on an extreme diagonal so that they are slightly longer than the penne.

Heat the oil in a large skillet and add the garlic and onions. Saute over high heat, then add the asparagus and cook, stirring constantly, until the asparagus are tender but still slightly crisp.

Pile the asparagus into a bowl and add salt and pepper to taste.

Cook the penne in plenty of boiling water for 6 to 8 minutes or until they are tender but still have some bite. Drain them, shaking the colander to remove the excess water. Add the penne to the asparagus with the rice vinegar and parsley, and toss thoroughly. Serve at once or leave to cool and serve at room temperature.