

A GUIDE FOR BUYING, COOKING, USING AND LEARNING ABOUT VALE OF EVESHAM ASPARAGUS

www.valeandspa.co.uk/asparagus







Festival characters

Gus

The Asparagus Man made his debut to the world at the opening event of the 2008 British Asparagus Festival in the Vale of Evesham and this larger than life character has gone on to be an everpresent figure at asparagus events.

Gus fact

There are 3 types of asparagus, namely the green, purple and white varieties.





Meet the Asparamancer

Jemima Packington, is the world's first and only Asparamancer, meaning she's actually able to predict the future using nothing more than a handful of asparagus by tossing the spears into the air and interpreting how they land. She has made dozens of accurate predictions in recent years, including Brexit, Royal births, celebrity scandals and many sporting achievements.

Gus fact

Asparagus is a member of the lily family

Vale of Evesham Asparagus

Asparagus is very likely the most famous vegetable in the Vale of Evesham...it's certainly the most celebrated! Often known locally as "Asum Gras", "Sparrow-Gras" or simply "Gras", its challenging growing methods make it a proud delicacy where it's best enjoyed between 23 April-21 June.

Theareahasperfect ground conditions to grow as paragus and forms part of a rich horticultural heritage that sees numerous farm shops proud to sell it in bundles (rounds).

This guide will educate on the vegetable's history and growing techniques, but also provide some useful, practical advice in how to cook it (including some recipe ideas), enabling you to enjoy it to its maximum potential.

There's plenty more information available about as paragus on the festival's own website.

The British Asparagus Festival

www.britishasparagus.com

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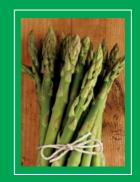
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History & About

For many years, Vale of Evesham Asparagus had become more and more popular following the success of the famous asparagus auctions at The Fleece Inn at Bretforton. Talks between tourism industry providers and local growers took place to decide how the area could capitalise on this popularity and "fillin" the week between the auctions at The Fleece with other asparagus related events.

The Vale Asparagus Festival was born!

Initsfirstyear (2006) largely through the marketing efforts of The British Asparagus Growers Association the festival attracted a lot of media interest and also many visitors to our area, as well as increasing the awareness of this amazing British vegetable.

Plansforthe 2007 festival progressed well, with festival friend and local celebrity Mr Henry Sandon MBE (BBC Antiques Roadshow) opening the event. Celebrity chef Rachel Green became the face of the campaign and even attended the festival doing cookery demonstrations.





Interestingly, during the promotion of the 2007 event the Vale Asparagus Festival was being promoted by the media as "The British Asparagus Festival" and has been known by this name ever since. During this time, the festival was communicating with the Stockton Asparagus Festival in California – who were very interested in The Vale's new venture. This was particularly exciting considering their festival is an enormous event worth many thousands of dollars to their local economy.

Growing & Harvesting

Growing as paragusisal ong-term commitment and a labour-intensive croptogrow. The crowns are grown from seeds for a year, transplanted and then grown for three years before harvesting can begin. The growing land is permanently dedicated to just that one crop, often for many years.



Year 1

Asparagusplantsstart their life asseeds that produce crowns. These take a year to produce. Crowns are planted in furrows down the length of a field and kept weed free.

Soilsmust belight and free-draining to ensure that the roots establish fast without obstacles in the ground. Fields are rotated, but generally cannot be replanted with a sparagus for around 30 years due to the disease pressure built up in the soil.

The Vale of Evesham is an important vegetable producing area as the soils are light, free-draining and warmup quickly in the spring. Heavier land outside the Evesham area is unsuitable as it does not drain freely enough for the crowns.

Year 2

In the second year after planting, growers can take a first harvest cut for 1 to 2 weeks then leave the crown to regenerate. The first cut is taken from the moment the spears emerge in April.

Year 3

By the third year yields take place between April and June.

Harvest

Harvest time begins when the first spears show in April until June. From the end of June growers leave the still emerging spears to grow into asparagus fern ready for the following year's crop. This cycle is repeated until the yields dwindle and the field is no longer viable to harvest.

When the spears are ready, they are cut by hand with a short serrated knife, firstly to measure the correct height of the spear and secondly to allow a push pull action to swiftly cut the spear at an angle just below soil level without knocking the spear into the soil.







The spears are then laid in field trays, tip facing tip, to avoid soil getting into the edible end of the vegetable. They must be refrigerated as quickly as possible to maintain life and quality and are then stored in high humidity for up to a week and are not washed until marketing is arranged. The quality deteriorates fast post-washing so it is imperative that field stocks are managed locally.

Gus fact

Asparagus can grow 10 inches in 24 hours!

Selling & Marketing

Traditionally sold in bundles, it can be "hundreded up" in 120 spearquantities for presentations and is held to gether by woven withy (willow twigs) shown below.



Health & Wellbeing

Asparagus can make you feel good by boosting your libido, as well as assisting in weight loss and detox. The levels of Vitamin C and E in this miracle vegetable also make it great for your skin, nails and hair!

Asparagus is a mild diuretic and is believed to help detoxify the body. Eaten regularly, asparagus packs an almighty punch to diseases such as cancer and heart disease as well as boosting your immune system.

Sevenspears (80g) is equivalent to one 5-a-day serving. An 80g serving provides 60% of the recommended daily allowance of folicacid, which can help expectant mothers to stave off infection and boost iron absorption.



Timeline

Ancient Egyptians were reported to enjoy asparagus.



6th Centur<u>u</u>

Gained popularity in France and England. The early colonists took it to America and often called it the "Food of Kings.



The arrival of trains to Evesham in 1866 opened new markets to the growers from Badsey and surrounding areas.



The auctions at the Fleece Inn, Bretforton, were well under way, while elsewhere asparagus cultivation declined.



The media start promoting the festival as 'The British Asparagus Festival'



The rise of supermarkets with year-round availability of asparagus is matched by an interest in seasonal local food and the British Asparagus Festival around the Vale of Evesham.



The Romans prized asparagus for its medicinal properties.



Brought over to London from France, varieties of Battersea asparagus' started appearing in Evesham.



Large quantities of asparagus were grown around Evesham with 240 acres in Bretforton alone.



The Vale Asparagus Festival was born attracting lots of media attention.



Vale of Evesham Asparagus is given Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status.

It's protected!

The Vale of Evesham delicacy of asparagus hasreceived as upremeculinary status putting it into an elite group of foods and drinks which include Champagne, Cognac, Roquefort, Parmesan and Jersey Royal Potatoes.



Asparagusgrowninthe Vale of Evesham was awarded European (EU) protected food namestatus in 2015 which specifically links it to aparticular geographical area and indicates a certain level of quality.

The Specification

The flavour and texture of asparagus is primarily driven by the growing conditions and soil environment, as well as knowledge and experience of how best to grow the product.

The Vale has along history of asparagus growing, with much tradition surrounding the product and enjoys a reputation for producing asparagus of the highest quality.

The Link

The sandy soils of the Vale of Evesham Asparagus fields provide ample depth of soil for crowns to establish deep root systems with which to store the sugars produced during summer. This promotes the health of the crown and gives an additional sweetness to the crop.

Theuniquecombination of soil and microclimate produce the fast-growing spears that are characteristic of the flavour and texture produced in the region. It is this combination of soil and climate that produces the high-quality as paragus production that the region is known for.

*All products using the name "Vale of Evesham Asparagus" and using the PGI logo will have to conform with the specification.

Where to buy

The best way to get your hands on Vale of Evesham Asparagus is to purchase it from one of the numerous farm shops and independent food stores in the district. Vale of Evesham Asparagus is most prominent between April and June but it's not uncommon to see it sold just outside this prime window.

Inaddition to buying the vegetable loose, there are many tasty creations produced locally inspired by the green 'gras', including porkpies, sausages and preserves. Don't knock them until you've tried them!

Below is a selection of local establishments where it's possible to buy the freshest vegetables and associated products.

For more restaurants and recipes, visit our website:

www.britishasparagusfestival.co.uk

Asparagus sellers

Birlingham Nurseries

Upper End, Birlingham, Nr Pershore, WR10 3AA

01386 750668 | 6 07973 500921

Local asparagus

Broadway Deli

29 High Street, Broadway, WR12 7DP

www.broadwaydeli.co.uk

Local asparagus

Castle Nurseries Farm Shop

Leelands, Broadway Road, Evesham, WR11 7RN

ff castlenurseriesfarmshop

Local asparagus



Clive's Of Cropthorne

Clive's Of Cropthorne, The Heath, Cropthorne, WR10 3NE

- 01386 860439 |
- ☑ cropthorne@clivesfruitfarm.co.uk
- f Clive's Of Cropthorne Home-grown asparagus



Chadbury Farm Shop & Café

Worcester Rd, Evesham, WR11 4TD

- www.chadburyfarmshopandcafe.co.uk Local asparagus

Ellenden Farm Shop

Evesham Rd, Evesham, WR11 8LU

- www.ellendenfarmshop.co.uk Local asparagus

Fruit Salad - Greengrocer

46 High St, Pershore, WR10 1DP

1 01386 552148

Gwillams Farm Shop

Ombersley Rd, Bevere, Worcester, WR3 7RH

- www.gwillamsfarmshop.com Local asparagus

Hampton Farm Shop

Pershore Rd, Evesham, WR11 2NB

- 🕋 01386 41540 | 🖂 info@hamptonfarmshop.com
- www.hamptonfarmshop.com

Local asparagus

K & J Mason & Daughters - Greengrocer

Pershore Retail Market, Pershore, WR10 1EY

Mill Lane Nursery

Mill Lane, Drakes Broughton, Pershore, WR10 2AF

- 1 01905 841650 | II millanenursery
- www.milllanenursery.co.ukAsparagus seedling packs

Round of Gras

Bretforton Road, Badsey, WR11 7XQ

- **1** 01386 830206
- www.roundofgras.co.ukFreshAsparagus,AsparagusMenu,takeaway,deliveries

The Evesham Farm Shop

28 High Street, Evesham, WR11 4HJ

Vale Fresh

The Valley, Evesham, WR11 4DS

1 07545 332055





Asparagus / associated product sellers







Abbey Butchers

10 High Street, Pershore, WR10 1BG

ff abbeybutchers.pershore

Asparagus pork pies, sausages and quiche

Café Craycombe

Craycombe Farm, Evesham Rd, Fladbury, Pershore, WR10 2QS

1 01386 860732

Menus featuring local asparagus

Croome Cuisine

Pond Farm, Church Lane, Whiitington, WR5 2RQ

www.croomecuisine.com

Online shop- Asparagus Cheese

Feli's Bar & Restaurant

Hawbridge, Stoulton, Worcester, WR7 4RJ

01905 840647 |
 □ bookings@felisrestaurant.com

www.felisrestaurant.com

Our menu offers variety of dishes featuring local asparagus

Hussingtree Gin

Hussingtree Blends Ltd, Tythe Barn, Martin Hussingtree, Worcs, WR3 8TQ

07903 425859 |
 □ tipple hussingtreegin.co.uk

www.hussingtreegin.co.uk

Asparagus Gin

Raphael's Restaurant (Hampton Ferry)

Hampton Ferry, Boat Lane, Evesham, WR11 4BP

- **1** 01386 45460
- www.hamptonferry.co.uk/restaurant

Menus showcase fresh local asparagus when in season

Revills Farm Shop

Bourne Road, Defford, WR8 9BS

- www.revillsfarmshop.co.uk

Revills Famous Homegrown Asparagus lunches. Sold by the Round in the shop fresh from the field. We can supply to the trade also. (collection prices only)

The Fleece Inn

The Cross, Bretforton, Nr Evesham, WR11 7JE

- www.thefleeceinn.co.uk

Serving asparagus menus and fresh asparagus; home of the famous Asparagus auctions and Asparagus Eating Competition.

The Queen Elizabeth Inn

Main Street, Elmley Castle, Nr Pershore, WR10 3HA

- www.elmleycastle.com

Menus showcase local fresh asparagus when in season. Takeaways available

Wayside Farm Shop and Tearoom

50 Pitchers Hill, Wickhamford, Evesham WR11 7RT

- www.waysidefarmshop.com

Fresh Asparagus, asparagus sausages, quiche, scone, jam and cakes

Local Growers

Clive's Of Cropthorne

The Heath, Cropthorne, WR10 3NE

a 01386 860439

⊠ cropthorne@clivesfruitfarm.co.uk

f Clive's Of Cropthorne

Clive's Of Cropthorne is a farm shop, butchery & farm restaurant, selling local produce as well as



This year we have a delicious asparagus dish on our menu in our farm restaurant.

Homegrown asparagus, wilted spinach and freerange poached egg, served on local sourdough with homemade hollandaise sauce!

Red Star Growers Ltd

Woodfield Farm, Birlingham, Pershore, WR10 3AG

01386 750670 |
 □ enquiry@redstargrowers.co.uk

www.redstargrowers.co.uk

Red Star Growers specialise in the growing and packing of produce. They grow their produce locally which includes: asparagus, green beans, spring onions, courgettes, tenderstem broccoli, carrots, beetroot and cabbage.

Springhill Farms (Pershore) Ltd t/as EVG Europe

Birmingham Road, Blackminster, Evesham, WR11 7TD

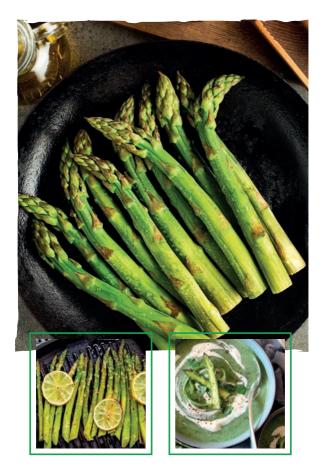
www.evgltd.co.uk

A family-owned enterprise covering 4500 acres of tomatoes, spring onions, asparagus, and combinable crops in and around the Vale of Evesham. They grow, pack, and market produce to major UK retailers, wholesale markets, and local farm shops, all whilst trying to produce great tasting British produce, as sustainably as possible.



How to cook it

People tend to have their favourite method for cooking asparagus, and for most people that method is steaming. Why not try one of the methods below and find a tasty new way to prepare these green delicacies once known as the food of Kings.



No matter how you cook asparagus, you'll want to start off by either trimming the asparagus or peel the asparagus stalks before cooking!

How to...



Blanch (or Boil) Asparagus

Blanching, or briefly submerging vegetables in boiling salted water, can be a wonderful way to cook as paragus. By cooking as paragus quickly in truly boiling water and then fully chilling it in ice water, you can "set" the green colour.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil, drop as paragus in and cook until just tender, anywhere from 1 to 4 minutes depending on thickness. Drain and put as paragus in ice water until fully cool. Remove as paragus from ice water and pat dry. Then they are ready for service.

Grill Asparagus

Grilling asparagus is a great way to preserve its grassy flavour - and introduce a smoky edge in the process.

Simply toss trimmed or peeled asparagus spears with a bit of vegetable oil and put them on a hot grill. Cook, turning to brown evenly, until tender, about 10 minutes total. Sprinkle with salt and/or lemon juice and serve hot or at room temperature.

Microwave Asparagus

Microwaving asparagus cooks them in a similar way to steaming.

Set asparagus in a microwave-safe baking dish, add 2 tablespoons of water, cover, and microwave on high setting until tender, which should take about 2 to 3 minutes. Leavestanding and covered for about 3 minutes and they will be ready to eat.

Pan-Roast Asparagus

Pan roasting is a combination of steaming and sautéing and gives you the browned edges of grilled orroasted as paragus without the hassle of heating up a grill or oven.

Heat some cooking oil or butter in a large frying pan over high heat. Add asparagus, cover, and cook, shaking the pan now and again, until asparagus is browned and tender, should take about 10 minutes.



Roast Asparagus

Put asparagus in an oven proof dish and cook until tender. Just adda little cooking oil to the asparagus to keep it from drying out in the oven. Sprinkle with salt and may be asquirt of lemon juice before serving and enjoy.

Sauté Asparagus

Cooking asparagus over high heat while stirring oftenleadstatender, bright green bites. This method works best with asparagus that has first been cut into 1 to 2 inch lengths.

Heat a large frying pan over a high heat, add cooking oil or butter and asparagus and cook, stirring, until the asparagus is tender, usually taking about 5 minutes depending on how thick the spears are.

Steam Asparagus

Asparagus is usually steamed as whole stalks, but it can be steamed cut into bite-size pieces, if you like. Whether you steam it whole or chopped, place asparagus in a steamer rack and set over boiling water.

Cover and cook until asparagus is tender, 4 to 8 minutes depending on the thickness of the asparagus stalks.

Stir-Fry Asparagus

Stir-frying brings out the nutty edge of asparagus' grassy flavour.

Cut asparagus into 1 to 2 inch lengths. Heat a wok or large frying pan over a high heat, add cooking oil and when it is hot enough to shimmer toss in the asparagus. Cook, stirring pretty much constantly until asparagus is tender and browned on the edges, 3 to 5 minutes depending on thickness of asparagus.

If you want to include garlic, green onions, ginger, or other aromatics, add them right before adding the asparagus and let them sizzle for just a minute before tossing in the asparagus.



Recipes

The versatility of asparagus makes it a wonderful ingredient to work with. The variety of methods to cookit, discussed previously, is evidence that it can be enjoyed in multiple ways.



There are an abundance of recipes incorporating asparagus to choose from, so there's no excuse not to purchase the local delicacy and produce a quick and easy healthy meal for all the family to enjoy.



Over the next few pages are some classic recipes from businesses closely associated with the British Asparagus Festival for you to try at home.

Visit www.britishasparagus.com/#cook to find recipes allowing you to eat asparagus in a different way every day of the 8 week season!

Gus says...

Why not try asparagus with hollandaise sauce for a tasty starter.

Why not try asparagus with smoked salmon for a succulent main course...

Revills' Asparagus "Twiglets"

Ingredients

- 1 round of Revills' homegrown fresh asparagus
- 4 sheets of filo pastry
- Melted butter
- 1 tbsp poppy seeds
 - 1 tbsp sesame seeds
 - 2 tbsp garlic mayonnaise or your favourite dip

Method

- 1. Preheat the oven to 180°C / 350°F / Gas 4
- 2. Clean and trim asparagus.
- **3.** Cut the filo pastry into squares, slightly shorter than the length of the asparagus spears.
- **4.** Brush each filo square with melted butter
- 5. Roll each asparagus spear in a square of pastry.
- Place the asparagus spears on a baking sheet and brush with more melted butter.
- Sprinklehalftheasparagusspearswithpoppyseeds and the other half with sesame seeds.
- **8.** Bake for 10-15 mins until golden brown.
- 9. Remove from oven, cool slightly and serve with



Salad of Birlingham asparagus with deep fried poached egg and balsamic vinegar

Ingredients

7 spears of asparagus

1 poached egg (trimmed)

1 peeled potato (Maris Piper)

Butter

Salt

Oil for deep frying

Aged balsamic vinegai

Red vein sorrel



Method

- Poach asparagus in boiling water, salt and butter for 4 minutes.
- 2. Place the asparagus on a plate.
- **3.** Wrap the poached egg in strips of potato and deep fry.
- **4.** Seasonthedeep-friedeggandplaceontopofthe asparagus.
- **5**. Drizzle with 12-year-old balsamic vinegar.
- 6. Garnish with red vein sorrel.



Perfect to make when asparagus is in season in the spring. It's easy to make, tastes delicious and can be served hot or cold. Serves: 2

Ingredients

250ml milk

250ml cream (double)

2 shallots, finely chopped

2 sticks of celery, chopped

1 leek, chopped

1 medium potato, grated

1 garlic clove

1 round of fresh asparagus, shredded

Method

- Boil milk, cream, and potato until it's soft then add the asparagus for the last 2 minutes. Stir occasionally soit doesn't catch, then add salt and pepper.
- 2. In a separate pan, sauté off shallots, celery, leek and garlic once they are cooked, add to the other pan.
- Once all ingredients are cooked and soft, blend untilsmoothandadjust seasoning, adda squeeze of lemon juice if desired.
- **4.** To serve; re-heat gently for 3 4 minutes and serve hot in warmed soup bowls or serve chilled.
- Garnish with diced cooked pancetta or crème fraiche and some cooked asparagus and serve with warm crusty bread.

A super quick and again dish for those mid a

A super quick and easy dish for those mid-week meals that requires little preparation time.

Serves: 4 | Preparation time: 5 minutes

Cooking time: 15-20 minutes

Ingredients

400g asparagus
170g frozen peas
350g pappardelle pasta
2 knobs of butter
1 tbsp olive oil
4 echalions, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, crushed
200ml crème fraiche
Handful of chopped mint
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Parmesan, grated



Method:

- **1.** Put a large pan of water onto boil for the pappardelle. While you wait, trim the ends off the asparagus and chop into 2-3cm pieces.
- Once the water has come up to boil, blanch the asparagus and the peas for 2-3 minutes and then place in a bowl of ice-cold water.
- **3.** Keep the pan of water on the hob and boil the pasta according to pack instructions.
- **4.** Meanwhile, melt the butter in a frying pan, then add the olive oil, shallot sand garlic and gently fry for 5 minutes until soft.
- **5.** Add the crème fraiche to the pan and stir to gentlywarmthroughmakingsureitdoesn'tsplit.
- **6.** Add the fresh chopped mint, asparagus and peas to the pan and stir through along with a little of pasta water to loosen the mixture up.
- 7. Once the pasta is cooked, drain well and add to the sauce. Season to your liking and then serve with a grating of parmesan, a sprinkle of more fresh mint and a drizzle of olive oil.

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Asparagus themed events





Saturday 23 April

Great English Asparagus Run

The Fleece Inn, Bretforton.

Celebrating not only St George's Day, National Asparagus Day but also the start of the English Asparagus season in the Vale of Evesham.

www.britishasparagusfestival.co.uk

Saturday 7 - Sunday 8 May

The Vale of Evesham Food & Drink Festival

Crown Meadow, Evesham.

An inaugural festival celebrating local produce with a particular focus on Vale of Evesham asparagus.

www.eveshamfoodfestival.co.uk

Thursday 12 May

The Asparabus Coach Tour

Throughout the Vale of Evesham.

The Asparabus, as seen on TV, lets you celebrate and explore the local asparagus harvest.

www.royalmotorways.co.uk

Sunday 29 May & Sunday 5 June

The Famous Fleece Asparagus Auction

The Fleece Inn, Bretforton.

Enjoy Bretforton Silver Band and bid for the season's largest, freshest and greenest asparagus.

www.thefleeceinn.co.uk

Asparamancer Predictions for 2022



- 1. Despite all the bad press, Boris Johnson will continue as Prime Minister.
- 2. Covidandallitsvariantswillbe withusforever, but everyone will learn to adapt and not let it get the better of us.
- **3.** A brand new way of living will become the norm—working from home etc., BUT people will no longer accept shoddy services hiding behind the guise of the pandemic.
- **4.** Entertainment and sports venues will find ways to progress whilst keeping everyone safe.
- More sadness for the Royal Family; scandals and worse.
- **6.** We will be shocked at the news of the unexpected demise of showbiz legends.
- 7. Areview of the Nation's Educational Standards will be carried out to make sure no child is left behind. More emphasis on vocational training will be introduced.
- **8.** Areturntotimeswhenforeigntravelwasanexotic luxury will be experienced. It will no longer be a regular occurrence and travel prices will reflect this.

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- Tense times will continue on the International front but conflicts will be avoided.
- **11.** Adaptability will become the by-word in the leisure and service industries; they will embrace the change in peoples habits and will survive stronger than ever.
- SirKierStarmerwillnotcontinueasleaderofthe Labour Party in a shock twist.
- **13.** Sadly climate change will continue and fewer countries will be active in its reversal.
- **14.** Recycling and Upcycling will be the new fashion. There will be less waste of any sort. Barter will become a new trend.
- **15.** Agriculture will progress well, and Vale of Evesham asparagus will continue to be recognised as the world's best.
- **16.** Croatia will win the Football World Cup 2022, but the competition will still be beset by controversy.
- **17.** Manchester City WON'T win the Premiership, but watch out for Manchester United.
- **18.** West Indies will be the surprise winners of the Cricket World Cup in Australia.
- **19.** England's Womens' Rugby teamwill have terrific success at their World Cup in New Zealand.
- **20.** The Oscar for Best Film will go to "The Power Of The Dog" and Benedict Cumber batch will be nominated for Best Actor.

Finally, the Asparamancer predicts
Vale of Evesham Asparagus
will continue to be grown and
harvested and will still be
considered the finest in the World.

