

# COOKING FRESH



*During the next three months, the fruits and vegetables of the earth will begin to spring forth to welcome the lengthening days and warming soil. In the temperate climate of the Chesapeake watershed, seasonality creeps up from south to north. If you define local as within a 100- or 150-mile radius, most of us can enjoy the rolling seasonality of asparagus, strawberries, peas and other spring delights from our own states or our Chesapeake neighbors. Most meats can be purchased frozen year-round from local farms, but our native seafood species still set their own schedules for the most part, so learning about their seasons will help you ensure that what you are eating really comes from the Chesapeake.*

## WHAT'S IN SEASON

### FRUITS

Blueberries, Cherries, Raspberries, Strawberries

### VEGETABLES

Asparagus, Beets, Broccoli, Cauliflower, Cucumbers, Eggplant, Green peas, Lettuce, Lima beans, Mushrooms, Onions, Potatoes, Snap beans, Spring spinach and greens, Summer squash, Tomatoes, Turnips

### SEAFOOD

Atlantic mackerel (April), Blue crabs—hard and soft shell, Bluefish, Black sea bass, Catfish, Clams, Croaker, Eel, Flounder, Herring, Lobster, Oysters, Perch, Scallops, Scup, Shad (April), Spanish mackerel, Spot, Spotted sea trout, Striped bass (rockfish), Tautog

*Sources: Maryland Department of Agriculture, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Virginia Department of Agriculture, Virginia Marine Products Board*

## THE INN AT MONTROSS'S CREAM OF ASPARAGUS SOUP

Recipe from *The Best of Virginia Farms Cookbook & Tourbook* by CiCi Williamson (Menasha Ridge Press, Birmingham, 2003).

*Chef Scott Massidda, of The Inn at Montross, is known locally as the "soup master." Originally established in 1684 as John Minor's Ordinary (tavern), this colonial home located in Montross, in the historic Northern Neck of Virginia—the birthplace of George Washington, James Madison, James Monroe, and General Robert E. Lee—has hosted many residents. The original ordinary, damaged by fire, was re-built in the 1790s. It is currently a five-guestroom inn and comfortable 50-seat fine-dining restaurant. The cuisine is French inspired, and all soups, breads, pasta, and desserts are house made. The Inn is owned by Chefs Scott Massidda and Cindy Brigman (phone (804) 493-0573 or visit [www.innatmontross.com](http://www.innatmontross.com)).*

4 tablespoons salted butter  
1 pound Northern Neck asparagus, chopped (*remove tips for garnish if desired*)  
1 (4-ounce) potato, coarsely chopped  
1/4 cup coarsely chopped yellow onion  
1/3 cup coarsely chopped celery  
1 clove garlic, crushed

1 sprig fresh thyme OR 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme  
1 bay leaf  
2 tablespoons flour  
2 tablespoons sherry  
4 cups chicken broth (*if not homemade, use low-sodium product*)  
1/2 cup heavy cream  
Salt, pepper & cayenne to taste (optional)

Melt butter in a large stock pan and add asparagus, potato, onion, celery, garlic, thyme and bay leaf. Sauté, stirring occasionally, for 10-15 minutes to release flavors. Add flour and stir constantly until incorporated; particles will stick to the bottom of the pan, just be careful not to burn. Add sherry and deglaze (scrape ingredients from the bottom of the pan using the liquid). Add chicken stock and simmer 45 minutes.

Remove from heat and puree until smooth using an immersion blender, or cool slightly and puree in batches using a food processor. Return soup to low heat and add cream. Add additional cream as desired. Season with salt, pepper and cayenne to taste. Serve hot immediately with a garnish of asparagus tips. Soup can also be refrigerated 4 to 5 days. Makes 6 servings.

• "COOKING FRESH" IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY WHOLE FOODS MARKET •