

Roasted Asparagus with Bootleg Hollandaise and Cajun-Style Tasso Ham

Introduction

Our Head Chef, Benjamin Thompson, *hates* this recipe. He's a classically-trained purist; when he makes hollandaise, it's all "bain marie-this" and "Escoffier-that." And it's great, don't get me wrong – but it's hard, and if you mess it up you have to start over.

This "bootleg hollandaise" method takes about 2 minutes, and is more or less foolproof. You'll need an immersion blender, and a cup that barely fits its head (I use a Pyrex measuring cup). It may not be traditional, but it's delicious. Just don't tell Ben I said so. Serves 3-4 and doubles easily. Hollandaise method adapted from J. Kenji Lopez-Alt's recipe in *Serious Eats*.

Ingredients

2 lbs. fresh asparagus, woody ends trimmed
1 Tbl. olive oil
Pinch kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper

3-4 oz. Tasso ham by **The Rock Barn**

1 farm egg yolk
1 teaspoon water
1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
Pinch kosher salt
1 stick butter
Pinch cayenne pepper

Method

Roast the asparagus. Preheat oven to 450 degrees F. Spread the asparagus spears in a single layer in a shallow roasting pan or baking sheet. Drizzle spears with olive oil, sprinkle with salt, give a few grinds of black pepper, and roll to coat thoroughly. Roast the asparagus until lightly browned and tender, about 10 minutes, giving the pan a good shake halfway through.

Sauté the tasso. With a sharp knife, square up the edges of a 3-4oz piece of tasso ham until you have a nice rectangle. Cut the tasso lengthwise into thin, even slices about an 1/8" apart. (Ben says: "1/8 inch for *julienne*, 1/4 inch for *batonnet*. *Julienne will eat better.*"). Stack your slices in a neat pile, and cut again at the same thickness to make matchsticks. Heat a sauté pan over medium heat. Add a splash of oil and sauté the tasso until golden brown and crispy, 3-4 minutes. With a slotted spoon, remove to a paper towel-lined plate to drain.

Blend the hollandaise. Combine egg yolk, water, lemon juice, and a pinch of salt in the bottom of a cup that barely fits the head of your immersion blender. Melt the butter in a small saucepan over high heat, swirling constantly, until foaming subsides. Remove butter from heat.

Place the head of the immersion blender into the bottom of the cup and turn it on. With the blender constantly running, slowly pour hot butter into the cup. Slowly! If you go too fast, the hot butter will overcook the eggs and scramble them. The butter will emulsify with the egg yolk and lemon juice. Continue pouring until all butter is added and the sauce is thick and creamy. Season to taste with salt and a pinch of cayenne pepper. Serve immediately, or transfer to a small lidded pot and keep in a warm place for up to 1 hour before serving. Hollandaise cannot be reheated or stored, so eat up.

Plate and serve. When the asparagus has finished roasting, taste and balance with salt and lemon juice, if necessary. Transfer the asparagus to a serving platter, spoon hollandaise over the top, and sprinkle tasso matchsticks.