PastaMania #07: "Farfalle Funghi Asparagi" (Farfalle with Mushrooms and Asparagus)

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Who said Italian cuisine has no vegetarian options? You can find this all-vegetable dish just about anywhere in the boot. However, it originally comes from central Italy -- especially the valley of the Tiber river, between Umbria and Lazio -- where you have so many woods to search for mushrooms and asparagus. Italians make this dish with both rice and pasta. Here, of course, we're going with pasta.

INGREDIENTS
Serves 4

- First you'll need 24 oz De Cecco farfalle
- 24 oz asparagus
- 6 oz fresh mushrooms
- 4 tablespoons De Cecco extra virgin olive oil
- 1 onion
- 2 oz Parmigiano
- A bunch of basil
- Salt to taste

PROCEDURE

- Clean thoroughly and slice the fresh porcini mushrooms.
- Finely dice the onion.
- Take the asparagus, remove stems and cut lengthwise into thin strips.
- Remember to only use fresh vegetables and prepare them yourself. They're more flavourful than frozen, pre-cut vegetables.
- Pour extra virgin olive oil into a large saucepan and add the onion first.
- After a minute or so, add asparagus and stir until the onion is golden.
- Once onion is ready, add porcini.
- Cook for ten minutes, adding salt and pepper to taste and stirring thoroughly till well mixed.
- When the water comes to a boil, add coarse salt and toss in the farfalle, stirring occasionally so it doesn't stick.
- Check to make sure the farfalle you are using is made in Italy with durum wheat semolina.
- The best Italian pasta stays firm after cooking and has a rough texture that the sauce sticks to better.
- Cook farfalle for 12 minutes.
- If you cook it longer, Italians won't like it! Pasta must be "al dente"—or firm to the bite. Don't strain the pasta—just remove it from the pot using a large slotted spoon and add it to the saucepan. The starch in the water will help the sauce stick to the pasta.
- Cook over a high flame for a minute or so.
- While stirring thoroughly, sprinkle with fresh basil and parmesan.
- Farfalle con porcini e asparagi should be paired with a crisp, fresh Italian white such as Pinot Grigio from the northern region of Alto Adige. Or if you want to stay in the region of origin, try a Grechetto or Orvieto from Umbria.

... AND REMEMBER: To make an excellent pasta dish, use excellent pasta!

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Links
[1] http://www.iitaly.org/files/pastamania-07-farfalle-funghi-asparagi-farfalle-mushrooms-and-asparagus