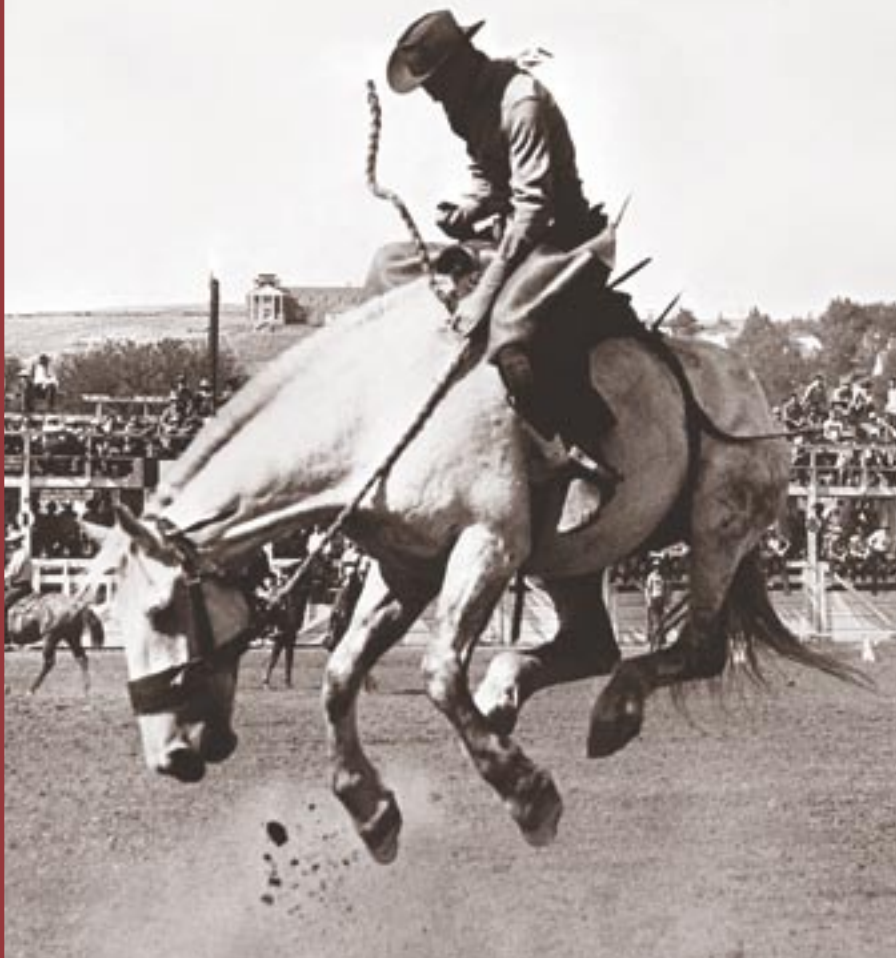


# Leader

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WAS KING**

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## Leader

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Address changes, questions, comments or requests for copies of the association's financial reports should be directed to Palmetto Farm Credit by calling 1-800-310-4805 or writing P.O. Box 4966, Spartanburg, SC 29305. Contact us by email: [palsc@palmettofarmcredit.com](mailto:palsc@palmettofarmcredit.com). Our quarterly financial statement can also be obtained from our website, [www.palmettofarmcredit.com](http://www.palmettofarmcredit.com).





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**ON THE COVER:** Asparagus is a member of the Lily family. Spears grow from a crown that is planted about a foot deep in sandy soils. Under ideal conditions, an asparagus spear can grow 10" in a 24-hour period. Asparagus is a nutrient-dense food, which is high in folic acid and is a good source of potassium, fiber, vitamin B6, vitamins A and C, and thiamin. It contains no fat, no cholesterol, and is low in sodium.



# When Asparagus Was King

By: Miriam R. Pflug, Marketing Manager

Thomas Fallaw, present owner and manager of Family's Farm in Monetta, readies asparagus for packing.

Asparagus—love it or hate it—there’s usually no in-between. Have it with Hollandaise sauce, in a casserole, or maybe even eat it raw. Do what you like, but you can find it grown commercially on only one farm in South Carolina. Monetta, once the asparagus capital of the world, is where you will find the sole asparagus producer in South Carolina—the Fallaw family farm, dating back over five generations.

Back in the 1920s, Joe Watson of Ridge Spring started the Monetta Asparagus Association and acted as broker for area growers in the state. At its peak, over 7,000 acres of South Carolina farmland were dedicated to the production of asparagus. At harvest time, 50 train carloads of asparagus would leave S.C. daily. The United States Army bought much of the production during the depression and war years. In the 1950s, asparagus was introduced as a new cash crop in New Jersey and Delaware, effectively cutting South Carolina asparagus producers out of the market due to the lower transportation costs of their competitors to the important northern markets.

Today, California, along with New Jersey and Delaware, are the major producers of asparagus in the United States, which leaves Gibson O. Fallaw, the third generation of Fallaws, to continue an almost forgotten tradition in S.C. farming. He, along with his son, daughter-in-law, and fifth generation grandchildren, grow asparagus - the only asparagus farm left in the state.

Asparagus farming is labor intensive, backbreaking work. Harvesting is done manually, which entails continuous bending and cutting, bending and cutting. Then there is the hand sorting, bundling, and crating. With the exclusive use of family labor, the asparagus is harvested and processed.

Mr. Fallaw’s son,



Thomas, and his wife, Sherry, operate the farm today while the elder Mr. Fallaw, now 83, still lends a hand and much advice. Now a multi-crop operation, the farm also produces watermelons, muscadines, butterbeans, and peas. The Fallaws also operate a pullet farm on contract for Amick Broilers. The pullet operation keeps the family very busy but generates a constant cash flow and adds diversity to the operation.

Gregg Fallaw, son of Thomas and Sherry Fallaw, is the fifth generation to work on the farm location on Farmview Road. He recently took time to walk the fields, talk about the soil, and give some pointers on cutting the asparagus spears. He related that it takes three years from seed germination to harvest, and the spears are cut twice a day. The crowns



Labels for the crates are beautiful and old ones have become collector’s items.



TOP: Family’s Farm located in Monetta, SC is the sole commercial producer of asparagus in South Carolina. BOTTOM: Asparagus is iodine rich and excellent for the kidneys.

are just under the soft gray soil and send the sprouts up to grow above the ground. The all-male plants do not have seeds, and the crowns will produce for about 10 to 12 years. Gregg pointed out the fields of tall ryegrass that protect the tender shoots from wind and blowing sand. A little Sevin dust is applied sparingly to control asparagus beetles.

The asparagus is sorted and bundled with interesting antique tools which are kept

continued on next page



It takes three years from seed germination to harvest and spears are cut twice a day. The crowns are just under the soft gray soil and send the sprouts up to grow above the ground.

## Asparagus (continued)

sharp and in good condition for daily use. The diameter of each stalk has nothing to do with the tenderness. Freshness is the key, and each bundle makes it to the cooler in record time to stand in pans of water until packed in crates for shipping. Asparagus shoots continue to grow after cutting when standing in water and can be trimmed with ends kept fresh for several weeks. Iodine rich, “medicine for the Indians,” excellent for the kidneys, the Fallaws’ crop is the best asparagus to be found.

The crates are filled and loaded on trucks to be delivered to fruit markets in several counties and to the Farmer’s Market in Lexington. The wooden crates are just tall enough and wide enough to hold six bundles of asparagus. The labels for the crates are truly artistic, and the older ones have become collectors’ items. Fallaw family members build the crates during the winter months.

The spring asparagus season begins on March 15 and concludes just after Mother’s Day. The good news is the Fallaws will have a summer asparagus season this year, which will run from July 20 until around August 20. Dr. Bob DeFault from the Clemson Coastal Research Station has been working with Thomas and Sherry to promote the summer asparagus and has provided valuable research to help ensure the continued success of the family’s farm.

Ninety-one years of South Carolina farm history is located near the center of the state. If you are in the area, stop by and visit. You will be glad you did. The farm is located on Farmview Road in Monetta. During production season, the Fallaws may be reached at the packing shed - phone number 803-685-7921. ■

## Asparagus Recipes

# Cashew-Buttered Asparagus

*2 lbs fresh asparagus*  
*2 cans chicken broth*  
*3/4 cup butter, melted*  
*1/2 cup cashew nuts, chopped*

Remove tough ends and scales. Place in skillet and cover with chicken broth. Bring to a boil and simmer for 8 minutes. Drain immediately. Combine the melted butter and the cashew nuts and mix with an electric mixer at high speed until well blended. Serve with asparagus.

## Asparagus Potato Roast

*2 lbs fresh asparagus, cleaned and trimmed*  
*1 lb red potatoes cut in 1/2 inch cubes*  
*2 envelopes Lipton onion soup mix*  
*2/3 cup cooking oil*  
*Malt Vinegar, Honey Mustard or Bacon Ranch salad dressing (your choice)*

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Toss asparagus and potato cubes gently in cooking oil. Place in shallow roasting pan sprayed with Pam—one layer (you may need to use 2 pans). Sprinkle with onion soup mix. Roast for 20-30 minutes, checking after 20 minutes—vegetables should be crisp-tender. Place on serving platter and drizzle with malt vinegar, honey mustard or bacon ranch salad dressing.

## Marinated Asparagus

*4 lbs fresh asparagus*  
*1 cup cooking oil*  
*1/3 cup vinegar*  
*2 tbsp. chopped parsley*  
*3 tbsp. chopped spring onions*  
*1 tsp. salt*  
*1/2 tsp. pepper*  
*1 jar pimento*  
*1 egg, boiled and sliced*

Prepare asparagus by cutting away tough ends and outer scales with knife or vegetable peeler. Bring asparagus to a boil and boil for 6 to 8 minutes (should be crisp-tender). Drain. Combine next 6 ingredients in a saucepan, bring to a boil and cool. Place asparagus in a shallow container. Pour cooled marinade over spears. Cover and place in refrigerator for 2-3 hours. To serve: drain asparagus; place 4-5 stalks on bed of lettuce and place pimento (which has been sliced into narrow strips to resemble ribbon) over center of stalks. Garnish with sliced eggs. ■

