Fettuccine Alfredo with Asparagus

INGREDIENTS  
  
1 pound asparagus  
3/4 pound fettuccine  
4 tablespoons butter, cut into pieces  
1 cup heavy cream  
Pinch grated nutmeg  
3/4 teaspoon salt  
1/8 teaspoon fresh-ground black pepper  
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese, plus more for serving  
  
Directions  
  
Snap the tough ends off the asparagus and discard them. Cut the asparagus spears into 1-inch pieces. In a large pot of boiling, salted water, cook the fettuccine until almost done, about 8 minutes. Add the asparagus; cook until it and the pasta are just done, about 4 minutes longer.  
  
Drain the pasta and asparagus. Toss with the butter, cream, nutmeg, salt, pepper, and Parmesan. Serve with additional Parmesan.  
  
Variations  
Fettuccine Alfredo Eliminate the asparagus.  
  
o Fettuccine Alfredo with Ham and Peas Eliminate the asparagus. Add 1 cup frozen peas to the pasta during the last 2 minutes of cooking. Toss 1/4 pound of deli ham, cut into matchstick strips, with the remaining ingredients.  
  
o Fettuccine Alfredo with Fresh Mixed Herbs Eliminate the asparagus. Toss in 3 tablespoons of chopped fresh herbs, such as basil, parsley, and/or chives, at the end.  
  
o Fettuccine Alfredo with Parsley and Sage Eliminate the asparagus. Toss in 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley and 1/2 teaspoon dried sage at the end.