

The Best Way to Cook Artichokes This Spring

Braising artichokes stuffed with pancetta, garlic, and shallots leaves them plump and soft.

Serves 4 as a side dish.



The season is leaning toward spring, when artichokes show up at the market, big and bulbous, taunting you to pick them up and ring them like bells. And after you're done satisfying your childlike wonder by waving them around like the little, nubby scepters they are, it's time to take them home and experiment.

Fresh artichokes — not their stripped down and squishy jarred counterparts — are a sight to behold. They're one of the most elegant vegetables out there, hard green and purple leaves unfurling to reveal a pliable, flavorful center. They take to many forms of cooking, but one of their sweetest spots is achieved through braising.

In Food52 columnist Emiko Davies' cookbook "Florentine: The True Cuisine of Florence," the chapters are each dedicated to the places you might visit to prepare for a meal, or eat one, in the great Italian city, like La Pasticceria (The Pastry Shop) and Il Forno (The Bakery). In the chapter Il Mercato (The Market), carciofi ritti, or whole braised artichokes, is one of the first recipes you encounter. It's not a new recipe by any means: You'll find it in many a Florentine trattoria at the height of spring.

Whole artichokes' tough outer leaves are removed and their tops chopped off so that they can be stuffed with a sautéed mixture of their stems, salt, pepper, and olive oil, and then braised in white wine. Emiko injects some modernity into her stuffing by adding pancetta, garlic, and celery leaves.

Carciofi Ritti (Braised Artichokes)



INGREDIENTS

1 lemon, cut in half
4 whole, fresh artichokes
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
2 to 3 pancetta slices, chopped
1 garlic clove, finely chopped
1 French shallot or small onion, finely chopped
1 handful of celery leaves, finely chopped
5 ounces (150 ml) white wine (or water or vegetable stock)
2 to 3 sprigs of parsley, chopped

TIP: Braise your artichokes to soft, succulent perfection with the precise heat control of the Electrolux Induction Range.

INSTRUCTIONS

Serves 4 as a side dish.

Prepare a bowl of cold water with half a lemon squeezed into it — this is to make sure the artichokes don't blacken from oxidation. Clean the artichokes by trimming them of the stem (keep these aside and finely chop) so that you have a completely flat bottom that the artichoke can 'sit' on. Remove the hard, outer leaves until you arrive at a layer of tender leaves, pale in color.

Chop the top half of the artichoke off completely and with a teaspoon remove the fluffy inside, if present (if it's a younger, tender artichoke there may not be any need to do this). Rub the cut part of the artichoke with half a lemon and place in the bowl of lemon water.

In a pan over medium-low heat, gently cook the pancetta, garlic, shallot, and celery leaves, along with the reserved stems of the artichokes, chopped finely, in olive oil until the vegetables are soft, not colored, and the fat of the pancetta has melted.

Tease open the leaves of the artichokes from the center. Arrange the artichokes, cut side up, in an appropriately sized pan so they are sitting tightly together, if possible. Spoon the pancetta filling over the center of each artichoke and pour some white wine into the pan to arrive about halfway up the artichokes. Bring to a simmer and cook, covered, over low heat for about 30 minutes or until the artichokes are soft—test by poking a knife into the side, it should slide in easily.

Serve with some freshly chopped parsley scattered over the top.