



# The artichokes are in!

by Vivian Byrd

A few years ago, when she was much less experienced with out-of-the-ordinary foods, a woman acquaintance of mine (no, I can't tell you her name; she's still embarrassed about this), was served artichokes vinaigrette at a dinner party.

Others around the table began peeling away the leaves one at a time. My friend did the same. She was munching away more-or-less happily for a short while. Then, simultaneously, she became aware of accumulations of discarded leaves on other plates and a similar buildup in the back of her own mouth.

Mortified, but keeping her cool, she quickly excused herself and disposed of the problem in the bathroom.

**THE CORRECT** way to eat an artichoke, which she quickly mastered, is to grasp the leaf tip with the fingers, scrape off the fleshy part between the teeth, then discard the tough stringy remainder. Start with the outer leaves and work inward to the small leaves that cover the choke, the hairy center growth.

Pull the cone out with the fingers and scrape the choke out with a spoon. Eat the heart with a knife and fork.

Artichokes are in season from October to June, generally more available in spring and fall when the plentiful supply cuts the price, making them more attractive to shoppers and grocers more likely to stock them.

Just last week, the first shipment of this fall's crop arrived in area grocery aisles, a little earlier than usual. They are expected to be priced about 49 cents each through the month of October.

In the U.S., they are grown in the southwest, California mostly, but some in Arizona. Mexico also ships artichokes to the U.S.

**THE FRENCH** have cultivated artichoke plants since the beginning of the 16th century. "Larousse Gastronomique," a cooking encyclopedia, devotes nearly four full pages to them, an indication that they are highly valued.

The French also enjoy baby artichokes, a size not usually marketed here. When quite young and tender, they are eaten raw with just a little salt.

Some cooks are intimidated by this odd-looking vegetable. However, it is

relatively simple to prepare and has great versatility. Artichokes can be boiled or baked, served simply with a sauce or stuffed with other vegetables, meat mixtures, or breadcrumbs mixed with olive oil and garlic.

The hearts can be removed and used in any number of ways.

**BASIC RECIPE**

6 artichokes, prepared as shown below  
7 to 8 quarts boiling water  
1 1/2 tsp. salt per quart of water

To prepare artichokes for cooking, first snap off the stem and break off any small leaves around the base. With a sharp knife, make a cut across the bottom. The bottom should be flat. To prevent discoloration, rub any cuts with lemon juice.

Lay the artichoke on its side and slice about three-quarters of an inch off the top. Trim the points of the remaining leaves with scissors.

Boil 35 to 40 minutes in a large pot. They are done when the leaves come out easily. Remove from the pot and drain upside down.

Served hot with melted butter, lemon butter or Hollandaise sauce; or cold with vinaigrette dressing, mayonnaise or a mustard sauce.

**LEMON BUTTER**

With a wire whisk, combine 1/2 cup (1 stick) melted butter and 1 1/2 tablespoons lemon juice and a dash of ground black pepper. Serve in a small bowl. Spoon alongside the artichoke or gently spread the top leaves, pull out the leaf cone, remove the choke and pour the sauce inside the vegetable.

**MUSTARD SAUCE**

2 tbsp. Dijon mustard  
3 tbsp. boiling water  
1/2 cup salad oil or olive oil  
Salt and pepper  
1 to 3 Tbsp. lemon juice  
1 tsp. parsley

Put the mustard in a small bowl. Beating with a wire whisk, add the water by drops. Add the oil a little at a time, beating the mixture into a creamy sauce. Add lemon juice to taste, salt, pepper and parsley.

**HERBED STUFFED ARTICHOKES**

1/2 cup dry bread crumbs  
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

1/2 cup chopped parsley  
1/4 cup chopped olives  
1 tbsp. grated onion  
1/2 clove garlic, grated  
4 tbsp. softened butter

Prepare the artichokes using above directions for boiled artichokes, but do not boil. Press the stuffing down well within the side leaves and into and across the top. Arrange in a casserole that can also be used as a serving dish, with about an inch of water in the bottom.

Drizzle olive oil over the artichokes, cover and bake in a 350-degree oven for 1 1/2 hours, or until the leaves pull out easily. Stuffing should be sufficient for four artichokes.

Comments or recipes you would like to share are welcomed, and should be addressed to Vivian Byrd, The Eccentric, 1225 Bowers, Birmingham, MI 48012. Please include full name, address and telephone number (for checking details).

# Harvest moon inspired recipe

The Chinese believe in the man in the moon — and that's not all. They say a beautiful young woman, a rabbit and a three-legged dog also live there. All these moon beings play a part in their happy celebration when the Chinese combine the birthday of the moon with a Thanksgiving feast in the annual Harvest Moon Festival.

The date of the festival varies each year, according to the phases of the moon, but it usually is late September or early October with poetry, music, dancing and good food. The Chinese favor festival dishes prepared in round shapes to honor the moon.

Moon-shaped shrimp medallions are complemented by the flavor of sautéed Chinese cabbage (bok choy) or celery cabbage.

**PAN-FRIED SHRIMP MEDALLIONS WITH CHINESE CABBAGE**

(8-10 servings)  
1 lb. Chinese or celery cabbage  
1 lb. shrimp  
3/4 c. water chestnuts, minced  
1 slice fresh ginger root, sliced  
1 egg, beaten  
1 t. cornstarch  
1 t. salt  
Dash pepper  
1/4 c. cooking oil  
2 T. cooking oil

Cut cabbage stems into half inch sections and blanch. Tear leaves into bite-size pieces.  
Shell, devein and mince cooked

shrimp. Combine shrimp, water chestnuts, green onion and ginger root. Mix in beaten egg. Add cornstarch, salt and pepper. Form mixture into small cakes, about 1/2 inch thick and 1 1/2 inches in diameter. Chill, covered, about one hour.

Heat 1/4 cup oil in a large skillet. Fry

golden brown on both sides. Remove and drain on paper towels. Keep warm. Add remaining oil to skillet and heat. Add cabbage stems and leaves and cook, stirring, until leaves are wilted and stems are tender crisp. Serve at once with shrimp medallions.



Crunchy, round shrimp medallions are served with Chinese cabbage to celebrate the Chinese Harvest Moon Festival.

# The Warming Oven

One way to help relieve budget tension is to plan for and make good use of leftovers. By planning for bonus meals, you'll find a saving in time as well as money.

When beef roast is on sale, select a cut large enough to provide an extra meal. Calculate three servings per pound for rib eye, boneless rump and tip roasts; 2 1/2 servings per pound for boneless chuck and cross rib; and two servings per pound for rib roast. Then add on the amount you need for the recipe you plan to make with the leftover beef, allowing some for shrinkage.

Appropriate for this time of year is a new sandwich featuring leftover beef, which is hearty enough to serve as a light meal in itself.

Grilled Beef Salad Sandwiches  
1 lb. coarsely chopped cooked beef

1 small onion  
1 T. chopped green chilies  
1/2 c. shredded Monterey Jack cheese  
1/4 c. mayonnaise  
1/4 c. thinly sliced celery  
1 t. salt  
1/4 l. oregano  
1/4 l. curin  
1/4 l. pepper  
Butter  
12 slices white or whole wheat bread

Combine beef, onion, chilies, cheese, mayonnaise, celery, salt, oregano, curin and pepper. Chill 1 hour. Lightly butter one side of each slice of bread. Spread an equal portion of meat mixture on unbuttered side of 6 slices; top with remaining slices, buttered side up. Grill sandwiches in large frying pan over medium heat until golden brown and heated through. Serve hot.

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