

12/05/11 - Braised Artichoke Hearts

Artichokes are an essential Sephardic vegetable. When I was a child, artichokes were only available in the spring. Basically the California coast harvest period was from April to June, and then, you had to wait until next year. Now I see them available in the market, most of the year.

Artichokes are traditionally served for Passover meals. I have learned to love them steamed whole, grilled, fried, marinated, and in dips. Roman style in Rome, breaded and fried in Israel, stuffed in Turkey and the Mediterranean, artichokes, that



Many are afraid to prepare the tricky thistle because of the hairy choke that protects the heart. Some only served them steamed to avoid dealing with the choke and then, many diners after eating the bits from the ends of the leaves leave or throw away the true delight of the artichoke; the meaty heart. It requires a few minutes and a little extra effort but you can serve just the heart of fresh artichokes and they are incredibly flavorful.

Serves 3 to 5

4 large whole artichokes

1 lemon

1 tablespoon olive oil

Sea salt to taste

Water



Wash artichokes. Trim the stem ends leaving about 1/2 to 1 inch of stem depending on the freshness of the artichokes. Using a sharp knife cut off pointy end of artichoke about 1 inch down. Begin to peel leaves off at base, leaving a nice pattern as you peel more and more leaves. Peel all of the leaves down to the purple tinged, thorn tipped leaves surrounding the thistle. Squeeze lemon juice on artichoke to prevent it from turning brown and slice artichoke vertically in quarters.



Scoop out the thistle, with a melon ball tool. Work quickly and complete the same



You will have 16 quarters. Heat a medium size braising pan with a lid on medium heat. Add oil and then, add artichokes. Sauté artichokes for a few moments,

stirring them occasionally with a wooden spoon or paddle. When artichokes are beginning to turn color, give them a squeeze of lemon juice, season with sea salt and place about 1/3 cup of water in pan. Cover and turn down the heat to medium



Check artichokes for tenderness by inserting a knife in thickest part. If the knife goes in easily they are done. If artichokes need a little more time, add another 1/4 cup of water, cover and let them cook a bit longer. Serve hot, cold or room temperature, with meat , fish or chicken.



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