

ARTICHOKES

At the April 2019 Cooking Club meeting, artichokes were one of the featured foods. This section of the Club's website provides information for those unfamiliar with this delicacy.

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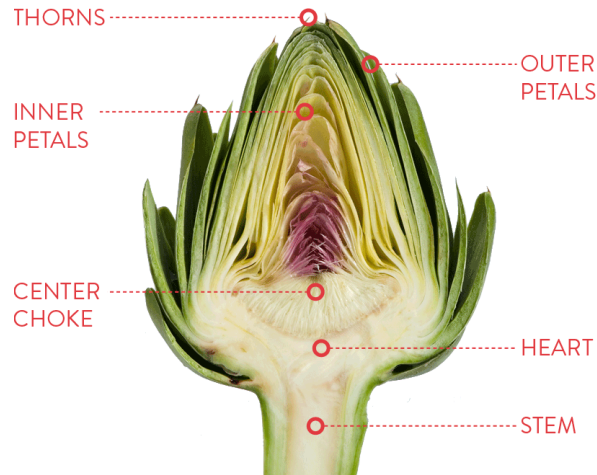
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Basic Information

There are two main types of artichokes — those that are round are known as “Globe” and those that are long and tapered are known as “Violetta.” Artichokes are giant thistles. The flowering bud of these artichokes is the part that is harvested. You eat the inner, fleshy part of the bracts (outer petals), tender inner petals, the base or heart of the bud, and the inner part of the stem. The center choke of Globe should be discarded and not eaten except for “Baby” artichokes.

Common Varieties:

1. Light red and only roughly one inch in diameter when fully grown, the purple **baby anzio** is a relative of the romanesco artichoke of the Lazio region of Italy. Like many baby artichokes, baby anzios can be cooked and eaten whole.
2. Developed in the mid-1980s by a California grower named Rusty Jordan, the **big heart** is aptly named. It is endowed with a large, fleshy base and weighs in at over a pound. This green, 3 1/2-5 1/2" giant—the first patented annual artichoke grown from seed—is excellent for stuffing.
3. The **classic green globe**, sometimes called just the globe, has a buttery-tasting heart and bottom and an ample amount of meat at the base of the petals. This artichoke, which ranges in size from three to five inches in diameter and was traditionally cultivated as a perennial, was originally brought to California from Italy but is similar in shape and flavor to the French camus de bretagne, a summer choke grown in Brittany.
4. The oblong **siena**, about four inches in diameter and born of a breeding program in central Italy, has a small choke and a wine red color. Slow to mature and still grown in relatively small quantities, this small artichoke usually weighs less than a pound and has a heart tender enough to be eaten raw.
5. The petite **mercury**, with its red-violet hue and distinctive rounded top, is sweeter than many other artichokes and is usually three and a half inches in diameter. Like the baby anzio, the mercury is derived from the Italian romanesco.

6. The dense and rotund **omaha** artichoke (up to six inches wide) owes its striking appearance to its sharply tapered red-and-green leaves. The omaha is less bitter than many artichoke varieties.

7. The two-inch-wide **fiesole** artichoke has a fruity flavor and a deep wine color that does not fade with cooking. Bred from the violetta de provence, a purple variety native to southern France, the flesole has a comparatively tender stalk that can be quickly steamed and eaten.

8. The **chianti**, a classically shaped, four-inch-wide green artichoke with a touch of maroon on the leaves, also (like the mercury) traces its lineage to the iconic Italian romanesco.

9. The blocky and vividly colored “king” has distinctive green spots at the tips of its leaves. Usually four inches in diameter and bred from romanesco varieties mixed with other Italian artichoke strains, the king typically weighs more than a pound in peak season.

What to Look for When Buying

Here are a few guidelines for what to look for when shopping for artichokes:

- **Choose artichokes that feel heavy** when you pick them up. If they feel light, they’re probably a bit dried out and not as meaty as they should be.
- If you squeeze the artichoke, the leaves should “squeak”. This is another way you can tell the artichoke is fresh.
- **The leaves should be closed** with just a little separation, not flayed wide open. Remember an artichoke is a flower bud, as it ages, the leaves open up. So an artichoke with wide open leaves may be on the old side.

How to Prepare for Cooking

Whether you are steaming, grilling, roasting, baking or boiling artichokes, there are a few steps to take in preparation.

1 Rinse the artichokes: Rinse the artichokes in running cold water. While you rinse them, open up the leaves so that the water gets inside more easily.

2 Slice off the top of the artichoke: Slice about 3/4 inch to an inch off the tip of the artichoke. A serrated bread knife works great for this.



3 Rub a slice of lemon over the cut top: This prevents the cut area from discoloring, just like an avocado.

4 Cut off the tips of the leaves: If the artichokes have little thorns on the ends of their leaves, take a kitchen scissors and cut off the tips. This step is mostly for aesthetics as the thorns soften with cooking and pose no threat to the person eating the artichoke. But snipping them off will make the artichokes easier to handle.



5 Remove small leaves at the base: Pull off any smaller leaves towards the base and on the stem.

6 Cut off excess stem: Cut off excess stem if desired, leaving up to an inch on the artichoke. The inside of the stem is part of the heart so do not throw it away.

If you leave the whole long stem on the artichoke, just cut off the very end of the stem, and peel the tough outside layer of the stem with a vegetable peeler.

7 Spread the leaves apart: Although you opened the leaves while rinsing,



you should spread the leaves apart again especially if you are using olive oil, butter, crumbled/ grated cheese, or other filling.

8 Remove the Choke: With the leaves moved part, you can remove the choke prior to cooking. Use a metal teaspoon, tablespoon or even a melon baller to scrape out the choke (the feathery flowers) but not the heart. Doing this is pretty much a necessity if you are making stuffed artichokes. Once you are finished removing the choke and stuffing the artichoke, you just press the leaves together to close them.

Cook for 25 to 35 minutes or longer, until the outer leaves can easily be pulled off.

Note: artichokes can also be cooked in a pressure cooker (about 5-15 minutes at high pressure). Cooking time depends on how large the artichokes are. The larger, the longer they take to cook.

How to Eat an Artichoke

Artichokes may be eaten cold or hot. They can be served with a dip, either melted butter or mayonnaise with some balsamic vinegar.

- **Pull off the leaves and dip:** Pull off the outer leaves, one at a time. Dip the white fleshy end in melted butter, a vinaigrette, or sauce.

- **Place light end in mouth, dip side down, pull, scraping through your teeth:** Tightly grip the other end of the petal. Place in mouth, dip side down, and pull through teeth to remove soft, pulpy, delicious portion of the petal. Discard remaining petal.

Continue until all of the petals are removed.

When you get to the tender inner leaves with the purple tips, you can remove them all at once. Dip and eat just the light colored parts of these leaves.

- **Scrape out the choke:** With a knife or spoon, scrape out and discard the inedible "choke" covering the artichoke heart.

- **Cut the heart into pieces and eat:** Underneath the choke is the heart. Cut the heart into pieces and dip into melted butter, a vinaigrette, or a sauce to eat.

RECIPES

Roasted Artichokes

Prepare artichokes as described in "[How to Prepare for Cooking](#)".

- Preheat oven to 425 degrees F (220 degrees C).
- Place artichokes stem-side down in a bowl and drizzle with lemon juice.
- Insert a knife blade into the center of each artichoke to create a garlic clove-size space.
- Drizzle each artichoke with olive oil.
- Press 1 clove of garlic into the center of each artichoke and season with salt.
- Tightly wrap each artichoke twice with heavy-duty aluminum foil.
- Place in baking dish and bake in the preheated oven until sizzling, about 1 hour 20 minutes

Steamed Artichokes

Prepare artichokes as described in "[How to Prepare for Cooking](#)". You do not need to remove the choke prior to steaming.

Set up a pot with some water, aromatics, and a steaming basket: In a large pot, put a couple inches of water, the garlic, a slice of lemon, and a bay leaf (this adds wonderful flavor to the artichokes). Insert a steaming basket.

Steam the artichokes: Place artichokes on top of the steaming basket. Cover the pot. Bring to a boil and reduce heat to simmer. Cook for 25 to 35 minutes or longer, until the outer leaves can easily be pulled off.

Artichokes can also be cooked in a pressure cooker (about 5-15 minutes at high pressure). Cooking time depends on how large the artichokes are. The larger, the longer they take to cook.

Fun Facts:

- The artichoke is technically a flower bud that has not yet bloomed.
- Artichokes were introduced to England by the Dutch in the 1500s and were brought to the United States in the 19th century by French and Spanish immigrants.
- March 16th is National Artichoke Heart Day.
- Until the 16th century, women were prohibited from eating them in many countries because they were still considered to have aphrodisiac properties.
- Artichokes should never be cooked in aluminum pots. They tend to turn the pots a gray color.
- The top artichoke producers today are Spain, France, and Italy.
- California produces 100% of the United States artichoke crop, with Castroville, California calling itself the “Artichoke Center of the World.”
- In 1947 Marilyn Monroe, then still going by her given name Norma Jean, was crowned Castroville’s first Artichoke Queen.

Nutritional Value per 100 g (3.5 oz): Artichoke, boiled and salted

Energy	211 kJ (50 kcal)	
Carbohydrates	11.39 g	
Sugars	0.99 g	
Dietary fiber	8.6 g	
Fat	0.34 g	
Protein	2.89 g	
Vitamins	Quantity	%DV†
Vitamin A equiv. lutein zeaxanthin	464 µg	
Thiamine (B1)	4%	0.05 mg
Riboflavin (B2)	7%	0.089 mg
Niacin (B3)	7%	1.11 mg
Pantothenic acid (B5)	5%	0.24 mg
Vitamin B6	6%	0.081 mg

Folate (B9)	22%	89 µg
Vitamin C	9%	7.4 mg
Vitamin E	1%	0.19 mg
Vitamin K	14%	14.8 µg
Minerals	Quantity	%DV†
Calcium	2%	21 mg
Iron	5%	0.61 mg
Magnesium	12%	42 mg
Manganese	11%	0.225 mg
Phosphorus	10%	73 mg
Potassium	6%	286 mg
Sodium	20%	296 mg
Zinc	4%	0.4 mg

[Link to USDA Database entry](#)

- Units
- µg = [micrograms](#) • mg = [milligrams](#)
- IU = [International units](#)