

Vegetable of the Month

Artichokes



The artichoke was first developed in Sicily and was known to both the Greeks and the Romans. In 77 AD the Roman naturalist Pliny called the choke one of earth's monstrosities, but many continued to eat them. Historical accounts show that wealthy Romans enjoyed artichokes prepared in honey and vinegar, seasoned with cumin, so that this treat would be available year round.

It was not until the early twentieth century that artichokes were grown in the United States. All artichokes commercially grown in the United States are grown in California and Castroville, California, claims to be the "Artichoke Capital of the World." California even has an Artichoke Queen — the most famous queen was Marilyn Monroe in 1947. She inspired more people to eat artichokes in that year reign than any year before or after.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size (56g)		Servings Per Container	
Amount Per Serving			
Calories 25	Calories from Fat 0		
			% Daily Value*
Total Fat 0g			0%
Saturated Fat 0g			0%
Cholesterol 0mg			0%
Sodium 70mg			3%
Total Carbohydrate 6g			2%
Dietary Fiber 3g			12%
Sugars 1g			
Protein 2g			
Vitamin A 2%	• Vitamin C --%		
Calcium --%	• Iron --%		
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:			
	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g
Calories per gram:			
Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4			

Artichokes are actually a flower bud - if allowed to flower, blossoms measure up to seven inches in diameter and are a violet-blue color. Artichokes are a close relative to the thistle.

Varieties

- **Green Globe:** year round and peaks in spring.
- **Desert Globe:** available from December through March and July to September.
- **Big Heart:** year round, with a lull in April.
- **Imperial Star:** year round and peaks in spring.

Did you know?

The Jerusalem artichoke isn't in the artichoke family, but is a member of the sunflower family. Its "official" name is actually sunchoke.

Selection

High-quality artichokes are usually compact and heavy for their size. Squeezed, a fresh artichoke will make a squeak. The thickness of each stalk should correspond to the size of the artichoke. Thin stalks signal dehydration, so look for stalks that are firm without "give."

Storage

Artichokes remain fairly constant in appearance for weeks, but flavor is adversely affected from the moment they are cut from the stalk. For maximum taste and tenderness, cook as soon as possible. Do not stock up on artichokes. Refrigerate unwashed, in a plastic bag, for up to 1 week.



Preparation

Artichokes should be washed under cold running water. Pull off the lower petals and cut the stems to one inch or less. Cut the top quarter of each artichoke and snip off the sharp tips. Artichokes turn brown very quickly once they are cut. To preserve the green color, one may dip in lemon water.

Artichokes can also stain the hands quite badly so it is recommended that rubber gloves be worn for cleaning and chopping.

Artichokes can be boiled, steamed, microwaved or sautéed. They can be eaten whole or added to other dishes.

Cooked artichokes may be refrigerated for several days in a covered container.

Microwave: cook 6 to 8 minutes or until a petal near the center pulls out easily.

Boiling: Stand artichokes in a large pan with 3 quarts boiling water. Cover and boil gently 20 to 40 minutes according to size, or until the petal near the center pulls out easily.

Small artichokes are good for pickling, stews, casseroles; medium size are good for salads and large size are good for stuffing.

To eat, pull off leaves and eat the fleshy ends attached to the plant. Lift out the cone and cut out the core, which is the fuzzy portion at the center. The heart is a true delicacy and will break easily with a fork. Dip the leaves in lemon juice or try the low-fat dipping sauce in the recipe section.

Make Artichokes Part of Your 5 A Day Plan



- Enjoy a healthy, tart treat-sprinkle lemon, lime and orange juices over steamed leaves.
- Add artichoke hearts to your favorite pasta dish or salad.
- Make your vegetable soup unique by adding artichoke hearts.
- Try serving and/or stuffing artichokes for a different appetizer.

Recipes

Artichoke and Roasted Red Pepper Salad with Roasted Pepper Dressing

Makes 8 servings

Each serving equals two 5 A Day servings

Source: Produce for Better Health

8 medium artichokes , prepared and cooked as directed for whole artichokes

4 red bell peppers

lettuce leaves

1/2 cup red onion, sliced

1/2 cup ripe black olives, sliced

1 Bell pepper (roasted), reserved from salad preparation (for dressing)

1/3 cup Balsamic vinegar (for dressing)

1/4 cup white wine or cider vinegar (for dressing)

2 cloves garlic, minced (for dressing)

1 Tbsp basil (fresh), chopped or 1 tsp crushed dried basil (for dressing)

1 tsp fresh rosemary, chopped or 1/2 tsp crushed dried rosemary (for dressing)

Halve artichokes lengthwise; scoop out center petals and fuzzy centers. Remove outer leaves and reserve to garnish salad, or to use for snacks another time.

Trim out hearts and slice thinly. Cover and set aside. Place whole bell peppers under preheated broiler; broil under high heat until charred on all sides, turning frequently with tongs. Remove from oven; place in a paper bag for 15 minutes to steam skins. Trim off stems of peppers; remove seeds and ribs. Strip off skins; slice peppers into julienne strips. Reserve 1/4 of the bell pepper strips to prepare dressing.

To assemble salads, arrange lettuce leaves on 8 salad plates. Arrange sliced artichoke hearts, remaining bell pepper strips, red onion and olive slices on lettuce. Garnish with a couple of cooked artichoke leaves, if desired.

For dressing, in blender or food processor container place reserved bell pepper strips, vinegars, garlic, basil, rosemary and sugar. Cover and process until well blended and nearly smooth. Spoon dressing over salads.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 128, protein 8g, fat 1g, percent calories from fat 12%, cholesterol 0mg, carbohydrates 29g, fiber 12g, sodium 332mg

Artichoke Gondolas

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals two 5 A Day servings

Source: Produce for Better Health



4 artichokes (medium size), cooked
1/2 cup sun-dried tomatoes (not oil-packed)
1 eggplant (small), peeled and diced
2 cups low sodium chicken broth
1/4 cup onion, chopped
1 Tbsp each of: fresh oregano, fresh basil
1-2 cloves garlic, minced
1/4 tsp pepper

Halve artichokes lengthwise; remove center petals and fuzzy centers of artichokes. Remove outer leaves of artichokes; reserve. Trim out hearts and chop finely. Set aside.

Rehydrate tomatoes in boiling water for 3 minutes until softened. Drain and rinse; chop. Cook eggplant in simmering chicken broth for 10 minutes; drain well. In blender or food processor container place chopped tomatoes, drained eggplant, onion, herbs, garlic, salt and pepper. Cover and process until nearly smooth. Taste for seasoning. Stir in chopped artichoke hearts.

To serve, arrange artichoke leaves on a serving platter; spoon 1 heaping teaspoon of the eggplant mixture onto wide end of artichoke leaves. Garnish with a fresh herb leaf, if desired.

Alternate serving idea: Arrange artichoke leaves on a platter, surrounding a bowl of the eggplant mixture. Use artichoke leaves to scoop up individual servings of the dip. Dip can be prepared up to 24 hours ahead and chilled until serving time.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 157, protein 11g, fat 1g, percent calories from fat 6%, cholesterol 2mg, carbohydrates 26g, fiber 15g, sodium 454mg

Artichokes with Garlic Dip

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals one 5 A Day serving

1 cup plain low-fat yogurt

1 Tbsp each of: chopped parsley and chives

2 tsp chili sauce

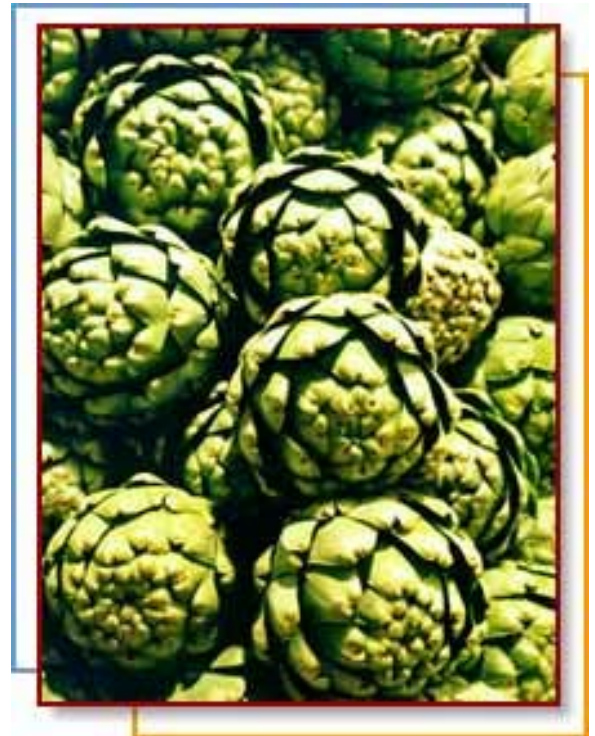
2 cloves garlic, minced

1/8 tsp pepper

4 artichokes (medium), prepared and cooked

Combine all ingredients except artichokes; blend well. Refrigerate until serving. Serve with cooked artichokes.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 133, protein 11g, fat 1g, percent calories from fat 7%, cholesterol 4mg, carbohydrates 20g, fiber 11g, sodium 384mg



Artichoke-Cranberry Stuffing

Makes 10 (1 cup) servings

Each serving equals two 5 A Day servings

8 artichokes (medium size), prepared and cooked as directed for whole artichokes
2 cup carrots, chopped
1 cup onions, chopped
5 cup bread crumbs
2 cup cranberries, freshly chopped (for easier chopping, freeze cranberries and chop with food processor fitted with metal blade)
1 Tbsp chopped fresh thyme, or 1 tsp crushed dried thyme
1/2 tsp ground allspice
1/3 cup orange juice
pepper to taste

Remove outer petals from artichokes; save to enjoy as an appetizer or snack. Remove center petals and fuzzy centers of artichokes; trim out hearts. Chop hearts and place in a large bowl. Set aside. Steam carrots and onions for 8 to 10 minutes, or until carrots are nearly tender. Add steamed vegetables to artichokes; stir in bread crumbs, cranberries, thyme and allspice. Toss until well combined. Sprinkle orange juice over mixture to moisten stuffing as desired. Toss well; season with pepper.

Use to stuff a 12-15 pound turkey, a large roasting chicken or other poultry. Bake any remaining stuffing in a lightly greased baking dish, covered, during the last 30 to 40 minutes of roasting. Makes about 10 cups of stuffing.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 160, protein 8g, fat 1g, percent calories from fat 6%, cholesterol 0mg, carbohydrates 35g, fiber 11g, sodium 220mg