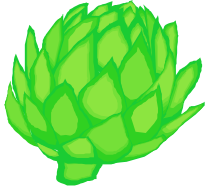


SPRINGTIME FOOD FUN

April 2000

ARTICHOKES –Because of their very unusual appearance, many individuals have never experienced an artichoke. I'm hoping that this may be one of your family's new adventures for the year 2000. My children and I associate artichokes with family fun. Since they do take a while to eat, we have a great time talking and laughing as we eat our way to the center of the artichoke. If you are trying to cut down on rich foods, yet want to treat yourself to something special, try an artichoke.



A single artichoke is an unopened flower bud from a thistle-like plant (the Latin name is *Cynara scolymus*). It is a vegetable that is rich in vitamin C and dietary fiber. In fact, 2/3 of a large artichoke provides 20% of the RDA for vitamin C and 17 % of the RDA for Folacin.

There are several parts or layers to an artichoke:

- The outer leaves are tough and inedible except for a small fleshy part at the base which is very tender;
- An inedible choke or thistle portion that is surrounded by immature leaves. This part is almost furry or fuzzy in appearance.
- A round, firm base or bottom that is totally edible. This is the portion referred to as the “heart” of the artichoke. Note: Canned artichoke hearts come from tiny whole artichokes that have almost no choke.

The size of an artichoke indicates where it grew on the stalk – large chokes on the center stalk, smaller ones on side branches, and “baby” chokes at the base. Large chokes (weighing a pound or more) are often stuffed and served as an entrée. Medium sized chokes are eaten as an appetizer; baby chokes are often marinated and served in salads and in hot or cold antipastos.

Selecting - Artichokes are harvested year round but their peak season is March to May. When shopping for an artichoke, look for one that is compact and heavy for its size. The leaves should be thick, firm, and tightly closed. If the artichoke squeaks when squeezed, it indicates that the leaves are plump, crisp and fresh. If the leaves are starting to spread apart, the artichoke is past its prime. Tiny holes in the stem end are a sign of worm damage that could be worse inside the artichoke.

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
University Extension

Helping you become your best.

Storage: Store fresh artichokes in the refrigerator in plastic bags for no more than 4-5 days. To keep them moist, sprinkle a few drops of water in the bag, but don't rinse, wash, or trim before storing. Cooked artichokes may be kept for 4-5 days in the refrigerator.

To prepare an artichoke, cut off the stem and 1 inch of the top of the bud. Trim sharp ends of the leaves with kitchen shears.

To Microwave: Wrap each artichoke in plastic wrap. Place the wrapped artichoke upside down in a 4-cup glass measure or any microwave safe dish. Cook on high power 4 to 7 minutes for one artichoke. Let stand, still wrapped, 5 minutes.

To add more flavor, I put ¼ cup bottled Italian Dressing into the 4-cup glass measure before adding the artichoke. Cover with waxed paper. Cook in the microwave on Full Power 4-7 minutes or until barely tender. Tip: Check doneness by piercing bottom of artichoke with a fork.

To boil: Place trimmed artichoke, stem end down into a pot of boiling water. The addition of 2 Tablespoons lemon juice or vinegar will add flavor and aid color retention. Cook for 20 to 40 minutes. When done, an inner leaf will pull out easily. Invert the cooked artichoke in a colander to drain before serving.

To Eat: Eating an artichoke may seem a bit overwhelming the first time. But you will catch on quickly. Begin at the bottom. Remove the leaves one at a time. Dip the fleshy base into a dipping sauce if desired. (Sauces: Melted butter has been a traditional choice, but try a lower



calorie choice such as Ranch® Dressing.) Holding the leaf curved side down, place the fleshy base into your mouth and draw it between your teeth. This will scrape off the tender flesh but leave the fibrous portion of the leaf. Continue with all the petals until you get to the thin, rose colored petals. The base of these may be cut off and eaten. Next comes the choke that is the fuzzy part. Scrape off all the fuzz leaving a flat, round bottom to the artichoke. This is what you have been working for – the “heart” of the artichoke. You can eat every bite of this part. Cut it into pieces and enjoy!

Source: The University of California at Berkeley Wellness Encyclopedia

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT BOTTLED WATER

AMES, Iowa--If you aren't in the habit of carrying around a bottle of water, you probably know someone who is. "Nutritionists have long promoted water as the best thirst-quencher available. Bottled water is a great, convenient alternative to bottled sodas," said Elisabeth Schafer, Iowa State University Extension nutritionist. "But it's also important to remember that the bottling process doesn't necessarily make bottled water better than tap water."

Schafer is co-author of a new publication that highlights facts consumers need to know when making the decision to purchase or drink bottled water. "Bottled Water - to drink or not to drink" (Pm 1813) is available from ISU Extension county offices and on the Internet at <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Pages/pubs/fo1.htm>.

The fact sheet includes tips for buying and storing bottled water as well as a comparison chart showing common brands of bottled water.

HEALTHIER EASTER TREATS

Celebrating Easter is fun for kids, but it can be a time of overindulgence in foods that are high in sugar and low in nutrients. So, put the kids in the kitchen and help them create some fun and healthy Easter foods.

Edible Easter Fruit Baskets

3 Tablespoons margarine
10.5 oz bag miniature marshmallows
5 cups multi-grain toasted oat cereal



Toppings:

Reduced fat cream cheese with green food color (grass)
Assorted fresh or canned fruit (grapes, berries, cherries)
Pretzel twist for the handle

Melt margarine in a 2-quart microwave safe dish (full power for 45 to 60 seconds). Stir in marshmallows, coating with margarine. Cook at 60% power for 3-5 minutes, stirring halfway through cooking. Add cereal and stir. Pour into greased 9X13 pan.

To make baskets, cut into squares. Use hands to mold into more of a basket shape. Spread with cream cheese to be the grass in the basket. Top with fruit and the basket handle.

Source: Adapted from *Communicating Food for Health*, April 2000

Edible Potted Flowers

Use the recipe for baskets, except this time use puffed rice cereal instead of the multi-grain. Gather the following ingredients and let your imagination run wild with creativity.

Toppings:

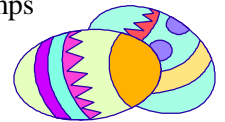
Chocolate flavored peanut butter for the dirt
Pretzel sticks for stems
Sliced banana for flower
Sliced almonds for petals
Green grapes or kiwi for leaves
Cherries for center of flower



NON-EDIBLE EASTER GOODIES

No Easter basket would be complete without a chocolate Easter bunny, but you can round out the basket with fun, wacky, non-edible treats that kids will enjoy. Members of the American Dietetic Association's Dietetics Listserv contributed to this list.

- Colored pencils
- Fingernail decals and stick-on earrings
- Flower and vegetable seed packets
- Children's card games
- Plastic egg filled with stamps
- Game of jacks
- Stickers
- A yo-yo
- Coupon for trip to zoo or movies
- Coins



Use caution in selecting items to avoid a choking hazard.
Source: Adapted from *Communicating Food for Health*, April 2000

DRINK THE MILK ON YOUR CEREAL!



If your breakfast includes ready-to-eat breakfast cereal, the label shows you are getting many vitamins and minerals. But, if you eat it with milk, be sure to consume the milk. Why? Many of the vitamins are water (or liquid soluble). They will dissolve into the milk. The longer the cereal is in the milk, the more the vitamins will go into the milk. This is not a problem if you drink the milk. However, if you leave the milk in the bowl, you are not getting all those valuable nutrients.

Prepared by Jan Temple, CFCS
Iowa State University Extension Nutrition
Field Specialist

Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating.

and justice for all

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Many materials can be made available in alternative formats for ADA clients. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964.