

Stuffed Artichokes, Sicilian Style (“The Splendid Grain” Rebecca Wood)

In 1972 I lived in Rome where I taught macrobiotic cookery at the Centro di Macrobiotica near Campo di Flores, the old market area. Previdenze, the head cook at the club, was Sicilian. She spoke no English, but I had acquired enough Italian to track her kitchen secrets. She was adept with fresh vegetables, especially artichokes, which she used in ever more interesting ways. Here’s my favorite. The filling cooks on the heart of the artichoke and flavors each leaf. No dipping sauce is needed. When the last leaves are eaten then the filling tops the lush heart. Squisito!

Serves 4

¼ cup cooked and cooled millet
2 chopped anchovy fillets
2 Tbsp fresh flat-leafed Italian parsley
2 cloves garlic, minced
4 medium-sized artichokes
1 cup dry white wine
½ lemon, sliced
10 whole peppercorns
2 bay leaves
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil

Combine millet, anchovies, parsley, and garlic. Set aside.

Trim the artichokes, removing damaged lower leaves and removing enough stem so that the artichokes can stand straight. Using scissors, cut barbed points, if any, off the leaves. Press the tops of the artichokes down on a flat surface to slightly spread leaves, leaving an open flower shape. With a spoon, remove the choke. Divide the filling among the artichokes, placing it on the heart.

Place the artichokes in a heavy-bottomed pan just large enough to hold them comfortably. Place the pan on an unlit burner. Pour in the wine and add water to come up about 1 ½ inches on the artichokes, being careful not to let water get into the stuffing. Add the lemon, peppercorns and bay leaves. Pour the oil over the tops of the artichokes so that each one gets a generous soak. Turn on the heat to high. Cover and bring to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer, covered, for 45 minutes or until the artichoke center is tender but firm. Use a slotted spoon to remove artichokes from the pot. Drain on a wire rack for 5 minutes. Serve hot or at room temp.

Variation: Substitute bread crumbs or cooked bulgur, couscous or quinoa for millet.