

Stuffed Artichokes
Carciofi Imbottiti
“Lidia’s Italian-American Kitchen,”
Lidia Matticchio Bastianich
Alfred A. Knopf, NY ©2022

Makes 6 Servings

“The flavorings in this dish are zesty—a combination of the traditional and a few touches of my own. The anchovies add a lot of flavor, but if you don’t like them, don’t use them. Lemon zest lightens the flavor of this hearty dish a little. (You might find that adding just a little bit of zest to other robust dishes will do the same for them). It may seem strange to chop the red pepper – especially as they fly around the chopping board a bit while you’re trying to do so – but it prevents you from biting down on a big flake of pepper in the stuffing. If you have vegetable stock or chicken stock, you may use it in place of the water called for in the recipe. It will surely add flavor.”

Ingredients

6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
3 lemons
6 large artichokes
1 cu coarse bread crumbs
2 large hard boiled-eggs, chopped fine
4 tablespoons chopped fresh Italian parsley
2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint
2 anchovy fillets, chopped fine
2 tablespoons grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
1 teaspoon crushed hot red pepper, chopped fine
Salt
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into small pieces

Preparation

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.

Grate 1 teaspoon of zest one of the lemons and set aside. Squeeze the juice from the lemons and pour about half the juice into a large bowl of cool water. Reserve the remaining lemon juice and two of the lemon halves. Prepare the artichokes for stuffing.

Peel and trim the stem of the first artichoke. Pull off any tough outer leaves and discard. Using a paring knife, trim away any tough parts around the base and stem of the artichoke. With a serrated knife, cut off the top third of the artichoke and discard.

Once you have cut off the top third with a serrated knife, push the leaves out to expose the fuzzy purple choke. With a small spoon, scrape out the choke to expose the heart at the bottom of the artichoke. Put the prepared artichoke in the bowl of water and lemon juice to keep it fresh.

Mix the bread crumbs, eggs, 2 tablespoons of the parsley, the mint, anchovies, Parmigiano-Reggiano, half the red pepper; the reserved lemon zest and 3 tablespoons of extra-virgin olive oil together in a bowl. Taste and season with salt if necessary and mix well.

Remove the artichokes from the water and drain them a few minutes on a kitchen towel, rapping them once or twice to remove as much of the liquid as possible. Gently spread leaves open from the center to make sure as much stuffing as possible ends up between the leaves. Dividing the stuffing evenly among the artichokes and using the palm of one hand, work the stuffing between the artichoke leaves and into the center where the choke was. You may not need all the stuffing to fill the artichokes. If you have any left over, you may use it as described below to make a thicker sauce. (Or if you prefer a thicker sauce, be sure to reserve about 3 tablespoons of the stuffing for that purpose.

Nestle the artichokes into an oval 12-inch ceramic baking dish or other dish into which they fit comfortably. Tuck the reserved stems between the artichokes. Pour enough fresh water into the dish to cover the bottom third of the artichokes. Season water with salt, and add the remaining crushed red pepper, the remaining 3 tablespoons of extra-virgin olive oil, the remaining 2 tablespoons parsley, and the remaining lemon juice and lemon halves to the water. Dot the tops of the artichokes with butter. For a denser sauce, spoon any remaining or reserved stuffing to the liquid in the dish. Cover the dish tightly with aluminum foil, poke the foil a few times with a fork, and bake until the leaves are tender when pierced with a paring knife, 30 to 45 minutes.

Uncover the artichokes and bake until the top of the stuffing is browned and crusty and an outer leaf is easy to pluck from the artichoke, about 10 minutes. Serve the artichokes hot in shallow soup plates, spooning some of the cooking liquid around each.

Donna's Notes: Lidia's original recipe gave a description of how to make garlic-infused olive oil, which can be used instead of extra-virgin. I used extra-virgin olive oil because it's what I had. You may be able to find garlic-infused olive oil from a local retailer. I also left out the mint and hard-boiled eggs in the recipe.