

Artichoke

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The artichoke, a member of the thistle family, has been cultivated and enjoyed since the time of the Romans. Artichoke is both a nutritious vegetable and a beautiful landscape plant. Plants can reach 3 feet in height and width, and the flower, if allowed to bloom, can be 7 inches in diameter.

🌿 Grow it

Varieties

- Green Globe and Imperial Star are the most common.

Soil preparation

- Incorporate 1 to 1½ pounds of compost per square foot into the soil before planting.

Planting

- Start seeds in mid-August for Central Texas and a few weeks earlier for North and West Texas. At the time of starting, be sure temperatures will no longer exceed 85 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Start seeds in a greenhouse, shady spot outside, or indoors by planting them ¼-inch deep into potting mix. About 60 days after sowing, seeds will have grown to a suitable size for transplanting.
- You can also buy healthy transplants from your local garden center or nursery.
- In mid-October, plant transplants 2½ to 3 feet apart in rows that are 3 to 4 feet apart.

Fertilizing

- Prior to planting, incorporate a complete fertilizer, such as 19-5-9, into the planting area using 0.1 pound per 10 square feet.
- Later, as the plants begin to grow well, put 1 tablespoon of nitrogen fertilizer around the canopy edge of each plant.

Watering

- Water the plants slowly and deeply when the soil is dry.
- Be sure to irrigate adequately in the summer to prevent bud opening.

Care During the Season

- Remove weeds and apply mulch around plants to restrain weed growth and conserve soil moisture.
- If there is a threat of a severe freeze, cover plants with frost protection such as a 6-inch layer of straw, a bucket, or a frost blanket

Insects & Diseases

- To reduce the chance of disease problems, leave plenty of space between plants.
- If you have trouble with pests or disease, contact your county Extension agent.

Harvesting

- The main harvest usually occurs in April and May.
- Harvest buds before the bud leaves begin to open, while the buds are tight and firm, by cutting the stem 2 to 3 inches below the base of the bud.
- Old stems should be removed as soon as all the buds have been harvested.
- After the harvest is complete in June, cut the plant back to soil level.
- During the following fall, plants will send out new shoots. Leave only the most vigorous shoot for production next spring.



Sun:
Full



Soil:
Deep,
Well-drained



Planting:
Fall



Harvest:
Early Spring



Life Cycle:
Perennial



Buy it

Choose artichoke heads that are dark green, heavy for their size, and have tightly closed leaves. Artichokes should also be free of blemishes. During the winter, artichokes may appear white, blistered, or bronze, but this does not affect quality.

Store it

Wash artichokes, place them in a plastic bag, and refrigerate immediately. Artichokes can be stored in the refrigerator for about two weeks.

Use it

Steamed Artichoke¹

Course: Side Dish

Serves: 1 artichoke per person

Ingredients:

- 1 or more fresh artichokes

Instructions:

Rinse under cool water and use a soft vegetable brush to remove any residue.

Cut off the whole stem and discard.

Use kitchen scissors to trim off the thorns and tips of the leaves/outer petals.

Cut off the top tip, or the crown, of the artichoke.

Place artichoke upright in a saucepan with 2 to 3 inches of water.

Cover the saucepan and boil for 35 to 45 minutes.

Artichokes are done when the outer leaves are easy to pull off.

Serve:

Remove leaves, starting on the outside layers of the artichoke. Use your teeth to scrape the flesh from the base of the leaves.

Leaves can be dipped in olive oil or sauces for added flavor.

Inside the leaves, there is a fuzzy choke. Scrape this off and discard. Enjoy the tender artichoke heart found under the choke.



Italian Artichoke Chicken

Course: Main Dish

Serves: 6

Ingredients:

- 6 (4-oz.) chicken breasts, skinless and boneless
- 1 Tbsp. Italian seasoning
- 5–6 Roma tomatoes, cored and chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 1 (14-oz.) can quartered artichoke hearts, drained
- 3 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp. sugar
- 3 Tbsp. flour
- ½ cup mozzarella cheese
- fresh basil to taste, chopped

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 350°F. Arrange raw chicken breasts in a 9x11-inch casserole dish. Season with Italian seasoning and set aside.

In a large bowl, mix tomatoes, garlic, and drained artichoke hearts. Add extra-virgin olive oil, sugar, and flour. Mix well.

Pour the tomato and artichoke mixture over the chicken. Cover with foil and place in preheated oven. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes.

Remove from the oven and uncover. Sprinkle mozzarella cheese over the top and place the chicken under the broiler for a few minutes until the cheese is golden brown and the vegetables are caramelized.

Remove from the oven and top with chopped basil.

*Serve over your favorite pasta or pair chicken with a fresh spinach salad!

Learn about it

Saturated fat and cholesterol free; low in calories and sodium; good source of dietary fiber, vitamin C, vitamin K, manganese, magnesium, molybdenum, phosphorus, potassium, iron, zinc, and copper.²

¹ Includes instructions from Cripps, K. (2020, July 31). Artichoke. South Dakota State University Extension. <https://extension.sdstate.edu/artichoke-pick-it-try-it-preserve-it>

² Have a Plant. (2021). Artichoke. Produce for Better Health Foundation. Retrieved from: <https://fruitsandveggies.org/fruits-and-veggies/artichoke/>.