

ITALIAN STUFFED ARTICHOKEs IN TOMATO SAUCE

Carciofi Ripieni al Sugo

Prep: 25 min	Cook: 45-50 min	Total: about 1 hr 15 min	Serves: 4
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Ingredients

For the Artichokes

- 6 medium artichokes
- 1/2 lemon
- Cold water, as needed

For the Filling

- 5 oz (150 g) stale Italian bread
- 2 large eggs
- 2/3 cup (70 g) freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano
- 1 garlic clove, very finely minced
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh Italian parsley
- 2-3 tablespoons breadcrumbs, only if needed
- 1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt, or to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

For the Tomato Sauce

- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 garlic clove
- 3 cups (700 g) tomato passata
- About 2/3 cup (150 ml) water
- Fine sea salt, to taste

Instructions

1. Prepare the Artichokes

Fill a large bowl with cold water and squeeze in the juice of half a lemon. Remove the tough outer leaves from each artichoke until you reach the more tender leaves. Trim the stem and cut about 1/2-1 inch from the top. Gently spread the leaves apart. Open the center and remove the fuzzy choke with a small spoon if necessary. Place the cleaned artichokes in the lemon water to prevent discoloration.

2. Prepare the Bread

Place the stale bread in a bowl and moisten it with a little water. Let it soften for several minutes, then squeeze it very well to remove excess moisture. Crumble the bread into a large mixing bowl.

3. Make the Filling

Add the eggs, Parmigiano Reggiano, minced garlic, parsley, salt, and black pepper to the bread. Mix thoroughly until you have a moist but fairly compact mixture. If the filling is too wet to hold its shape, add breadcrumbs 1 tablespoon at a time. Do not make it overly firm.

4. Stuff the Artichokes

Drain the artichokes and pat them dry. Gently open the leaves again. Push small amounts of filling between some of the leaves, then generously fill the center of each artichoke. Press lightly so the filling stays in place without packing it too tightly.

5. Start the Tomato Sauce

Heat the extra virgin olive oil in a large, deep saucepan or Dutch oven over medium-low heat. Add the chopped onion and whole garlic clove. Cook for 4-5 minutes, until the onion is soft and translucent without browning. Pour in the tomato passata, add the water, season lightly with salt, and simmer for 5-10 minutes.

6. Add the Stuffed Artichokes

Arrange the stuffed artichokes upright in the tomato sauce with the filling facing upward. Use a pot that holds them fairly snugly so they stay standing during cooking. The sauce should come approximately halfway up the sides of the artichokes. Add a little more water if necessary.

7. Slowly Cook the Artichokes

Cover the saucepan and reduce the heat to low. Simmer for 40-50 minutes, or until the artichokes are completely tender. Every 10-15 minutes, spoon some tomato sauce over the tops. Avoid stirring them with a spoon so the filling does not fall out. The artichokes are done when the tip of a knife slides easily into the base.

8. Rest and Serve

Turn off the heat and let the stuffed artichokes rest in their sauce for about 10 minutes. Spoon plenty of tomato sauce onto each plate and place the artichokes on top. Serve warm with crusty Italian bread.

Nonna's Tips

- Don't overfill the artichokes. The egg in the stuffing causes it to expand slightly while cooking.
- Use stale bread rather than dry breadcrumbs for most of the filling. It creates a softer, more traditional texture.
- Keep the artichokes upright. A saucepan just large enough to hold them close together helps prevent them from tipping over.
- Cook them slowly. A gentle simmer allows the artichokes to become tender without breaking apart.
- Don't waste the sauce. Any tomato sauce left in the pot is delicious with pasta the next day.
- For extra flavor, replace a small portion of the Parmigiano Reggiano with grated Pecorino Romano.