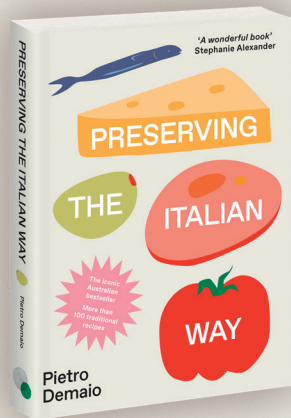


PRESERVING THE ITALIAN WAY

Pietro Demaio

Globe artichokes in oil

Carciofi sott'olio



Artichokes look difficult to prepare, but once you remove all the dark outer leaves you'll expose the soft tender heart (a bit like us Italians!). Simply peel or cut away the dark outer leaves until you are left with pale green leaves that feel soft to the touch. Cut off the stem and the top third of the leaves, exposing the heart, then use a teaspoon to gently scrape out the hairy 'choke' that circles the heart.

These artichokes in oil are excellent quartered and used in a salad or as part of an antipasto platter. Buy the small artichokes, about 3 cm in diameter, at the beginning of the season (September).

2 kg small globe artichokes, trimmed as described opposite
handful of plain flour
500 ml white wine vinegar
about 5 dried bay leaves
1-2 garlic cloves, peeled and left whole,
plus 6 garlic cloves, sliced
1 tablespoon table salt
dried mint, oregano and chilli flakes,
to taste (optional)
extra-virgin olive oil, to cover

Once you've trimmed the artichokes, immediately place them in a bowl of cold water with the flour (this prevents them from oxidising).

In a saucepan, bring the white wine vinegar, 1 litre of water, 1-2 bay leaves, the whole garlic cloves and salt to the boil. Once boiling, drop in the artichokes. When the mixture returns to the boil, cook the artichokes for 2-5 minutes or until tender.

Drain the artichokes and allow to cool overnight (just leave them in the colander). The next morning, place the artichokes in clean jars (see steps 1-2, page 21) and divide the sliced garlic and remaining bay leaves among them. You could also add dried mint, oregano or chilli flakes, if desired. Completely cover with oil, then seal.

Store in a cool, dark place for at least 2 months before eating. The artichokes will keep for up to 1 year unopened. Once opened, store in the fridge, where they will keep for up to 1 month.

