

Food For Thought

TIPS ON TASTE, NUTRITION & HEALTH

How To Microwave An Artichoke

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(NAPSA)—Unless you grew up in artichoke country—California—you may be a little hesitant when it comes to cooking artichokes. But with a microwave, a sharp knife and scissors you can treat yourself to the wonderful flavor of artichokes at home. Here are five easy steps that will take you from the supermarket to the last delicious bite of the artichoke's heart.



Dr. Pivonka

- Start by choosing firm artichokes with tightly packed leaves. Fresh artichokes are compact and heavy for their size. They can be stored in a perforated plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to a week.

- Rinse artichokes well. True aficionados leave the stem on since it is an extension of the heart or you can cut off the stem right at the base. Cut off the top third of the artichoke and snip off the tips of the remaining leaves with scissors, if desired.

- Place the artichokes in a microwave-safe container and add $\frac{1}{2}$ a cup of water for each artichoke. Cover them with a lid or microwaveable plastic wrap and cook one artichoke on High for about 6 to 8 minutes. Add about 4 to 6 minutes to the cooking time for each additional artichoke. Exact cooking time will vary with the size of the artichoke and the power of your microwave.

- Let the artichokes stand for a minute or two, and then test them for doneness; the leaves near the center will pull off easily when the artichokes are done. Drain and cool.

- Press your thumbs in the center of the artichoke and pull the leaves toward the outside to expose the light green cone of leaves in the center. Use a spoon to scrape out small purple-tipped petals and the fuzzy fibers that are just on top of



the tender artichoke heart. Serve artichokes hot or chilled. Dip the base of each leaf into your favorite sauce and pull it through your teeth to scrape off the artichoke meat at the base. Continue until you reach the heart, and enjoy each wonderful bite.

Artichoke Nutrition

Containing only 25 calories each, artichokes are fat and cholesterol-free and low in sodium, but loaded with nutrients. They are a good source of folate, magnesium, fiber and vitamin C, making them a terrific choice for today's on-the-go, health and diet-conscious population. Eating 5 or more fruits or vegetables every day helps reduce the risk of developing diseases like cancer, stroke, and heart disease.

Creamy Artichoke Dip

Makes about $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fat-free sour cream
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup low fat mayonnaise
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup finely chopped fresh parsley
- 1 teaspoon dried dill
- 1 small clove of garlic, finely minced
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

Mix all ingredients in a small bowl and refrigerate until ready to serve.

Nutrients per tablespoon:
Calories 18; Protein 0.5g; Fat 0.5g; Calories from Fat 22%; Carbohydrates 3g; Cholesterol 0.5mg; Fiber 0g; Sodium 68mg

For more information and recipes, go to:

www.oceanmist.com

www.5aday.com

www.aboutproduce.com



Note to Editors: Forty-second in a series of monthly 5-A-Day columns. For previous stories featuring other fruits and vegetables go to www.napsnet.com and search: "Pivonka."