

# How to Choose, Prepare and Eat an Artichoke

Some artichokes have rounder leaves, some appear more pointy, some are smaller than others, however, all be prepared and eaten the same way. When choosing artichokes at the store, you want the ones that are heavy and firm. I like to choose the ones with the thickest stalks as well. Before cooking, wash artichokes in cool water. I like to then remove the stem so that I have a flat surface on the bottom of the artichoke. Trim away any excess leaves on the stem and then cut a dime-width sliver from the bottom end. You can cook the stem right along with the rest of the artichoke since the tender inside is a continuation of the heart.

I like to leave the head intact, since the top end of each leaf is good for holding while eating. Some artichokes are more prickly than others. The round, globe artichokes may not need the tops trimmed, whereas the taller varieties have a small thorn at the top that is easier to hold when it is cut off.

Once trimmed, place the artichoke with the leaves facing up in a large pot or Dutch oven. Arrange the stems in around the heads, and fill the bottom of the pot with 1 to 2 inches of water. You should have enough water for the artichokes to cook for 45 minutes to an hour without the water evaporating. Next, bring the water to a boil over medium heat, cover, turn to low or medium-low, and simmer for 45 minutes to 1 hour. You'll know when the artichokes are cooked through when one of the middle leaves can be easily pulled out.

To eat the artichoke, pull the leaves out one by one and scrape them against your teeth to remove the tender flesh. Don't eat the fibrous portions of the leaf. Although the stems can have long thick fibers, the tender middle is still delicious. The stem is one of my favorite parts. When you get to the middle leaves, you'll be able to pull several at a time and just bite the tender ends off. Once you get to the tiny, thistle hairs in the middle, remove that part with a spoon, and enjoy the meaty bottom. Cooked artichokes can be eaten warm or kept in the refrigerator for up to a week.

## Ume-Flax Dipping Sauce

You can find Umeboshi paste or Ume Plum vinegar online, at natural food stores, or in a Japanese market. Use it raw before serving or cook it in (caution: a little goes a long way). Even though it's called ume plum vinegar, it's not actually vinegar. It's the salt pickling brine of the umeboshi plum.

1 tablespoon Umeboshi paste, or 2 tablespoons  
Umeboshi vinegar, or to taste  
3 tablespoons water

1 inch slice raw zucchini (optional)  
1/3 cup flax oil

Put the Umeboshi paste or vinegar, zucchini, and water in a wide mouth mason jar or cup that will fit an immersion blender without splashing. Blend until smooth (the zucchini will add a bit of bulk to help emulsify the oil). Add the flax oil. Continue blending. Adjust seasonings to taste.

Recipe from the Chef Dawn Ludwig Blog at <https://www.DrDavidLudwig.com/category/chef-dawn/>