

# Artichokes Are Easy

by Elizabeth Pivonka, Ph.D.,  
President, Produce for Better  
Health Foundation

(NAPSA)—Did you know that Castroville, California is America's artichoke capital? In the lush rolling fields around Castroville,



Elizabeth Pivonka

artichokes grow from softball-to-egg-size. The big ones are great to cook and stuff with fillings like tuna or pasta salad. Medium size artichokes are perfect for single servings and babies are almost completely edible and great for sautéing or roasting.

Look for compact, heavy-for-their-size artichokes. Store them in the crisper section of the refrigerator and use them within a week. Artichokes with thorns—they're at the tip of their petals—have bigger hearts and are better eating than the thornless varieties.

At just 25 calories each, artichokes are a good source of fiber and the important nutrients: vitamin C, folic acid and magnesium. They are naturally low in sodium, and fat and cholesterol free. There is overwhelming evidence that eating 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day can significantly reduce the risk of getting diseases like cancer, heart disease and stroke. This healthy vegetable is easy to prepare and cook, and really fun to eat.

## Here's how easy it is to prepare artichokes:

1. Use a sharp knife to cut off the stem at the base and the top ¼ of the artichoke.
2. Trim the tips of the remaining petals with kitchen shears.
3. Cook by any of the methods below.
4. Drain well. Press the petals back and remove the small purple-tipped center petals and the fuzzy choke with a spoon.

## Here's how easy it is to cook artichokes:

- **Boil** in 3 inches of water in a covered pot until a petal near the center pulls out easily, about 25 to 40 minutes, depending on the size of the artichoke.
- **Microwave** in a deep bowl with ½ cup water for each arti-



choke. Cover with plastic wrap and cook on "high" for 8 to 12 minutes for one artichoke or 12 to 15 minutes for two. Let stand 2 minutes. Test for doneness as above.

- **Steam** on a rack over boiling water in a covered pot; and cook the same time as for boiling.

## Here's how easy it is to eat artichokes:

1. Pull the outer petals off one at a time and dip them in a sauce or dressing.
2. Put the base of the petal in your mouth. Bite down gently and pull the petal through your teeth to scrape off the "meat" at the base of the petal. Continue until you get to the center.
3. Remove the choke and cut the bottom or "heart" into bite-sized pieces.

## Artichokes With Balsamic Vinegar

**Cook artichokes as directed. Cut in half and remove the choke. Place on serving plate, cut-side up. Drizzle good quality balsamic vinegar into the cup. Dip petals and artichoke heart in the vinegar as you eat.**

**Nutrients per serving: Calories 17; Fat 0g; Cholesterol 0mg; Protein 2g; Carbohydrates 4g; Sodium 27mg; Fiber 2g.**

For more information on artichokes and 5 A Day for Better Health go to: [www.oceanmist.com](http://www.oceanmist.com); [www.5aday.com](http://www.5aday.com); [www.aboutproduce.com](http://www.aboutproduce.com).