

Seasonal Eating
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Spring Flavors: Artichokes and Lemon
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Artichokes and lemon always remind me of spring flavors. The bright citrus perks up any dish and I love the flavor of artichokes. I don't use many fresh artichokes – they can be difficult to clean out the fuzzy choke, but I often use canned or marinated artichoke hearts. The marinated ones have a flavorful oil around them and depending on the dish, I often substitute one for the other using what I have on hand, even though they are different.

The artichoke hearts are the most tender part of the artichoke, while the leaves (or technically petals, since an artichoke is a flower bud) can be a little more tough. Often, I chop up the leaves across the length to make them more tender. It is the same principle as cutting meat across the grain. So, taste your artichokes and make sure they are tender.



One of my favorite tools in the kitchen is a lemon squeezer, which is a hinged bowl with holes that squeezes the juice out while catching the seeds. It is the easiest way to get citrus juice – just make sure the cut side of the lemon is facing the holes. If you need the zest of the lemon or other citrus, make sure you zest it before squeezing out the juice. There is actually more flavor and intense oils in the zest than in the juice itself. So if you want to ramp up the citrus flavor, use the zest along with the juice. When using a marinade that has a lot of strong citrus, like lemon juice, don't let it marinate too long or the outside of the meat or seafood may get a little mushy/cooked from the acidity. Usually 30 minutes or so in the marinade is enough.

The chicken recipe below is a flavor packed, delicious main dish with lemon marinated chicken in a sauce with artichokes, pancetta, rosemary and shallots. If you don't have shallots on hand just use an onion. Pancetta is like an Italian bacon that is not smoked – you can find it usually in the deli section of the grocery store. If you want to use bacon that would be fine or you can leave it out entirely and you will still have a delicious dish. This dish is great for company and only uses 3 tablespoons of fat in form of olive oil. Add some bread on the side or some noodles for a great spring dinner.

For more information and recipes check out the Seasonal Eating page at bedford.tennessee.edu.

Lemon Artichoke Chicken Breasts

- 1 cup chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 3 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1 1/2 teaspoons lemon zest
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, divided
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 4 (6-ounce) boneless, skinless chicken breasts

1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1/2 cup thinly sliced shallot
1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary
2 ounces pancetta, finely chopped
1 tablespoon chopped garlic
1/2 cup dry sherry
1 (15-ounce) can quartered artichoke hearts, drained
4 teaspoons chopped fresh flat leaf parsley, divided

Combine chicken broth and flour, stirring with a whisk, set aside. Whisk together 1 tablespoon of the oil, lemon zest, 4 teaspoons of lemon juice and garlic powder. Place chicken in a zip top bag and pour the lemon mixture in, mixing to distribute the marinade. Let stand for 30 minutes. Heat another 1 tablespoon of oil in a large skillet. Remove chicken from marinade and place in skillet. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Cook for 5 minutes on each side or until just done. Remove to a platter. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon of oil to the pan. Add shallots, rosemary and pancetta. Cook for 3 minutes or until shallots are tender. Add garlic and cook for 30 seconds. Add sherry to pan and cook until liquid almost evaporates, scraping any bits off the bottom of the pan. Stir in the chicken broth mixture and artichokes. Cook until mixture thickens slightly. Stir in remaining 2 teaspoons lemon juice and 2 teaspoons of parsley. If sauce is too thick, add a little water. Add the chicken back to the pan and coat with sauce. Sprinkle with remaining 2 teaspoons parsley.