



MARKETPLACE

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TRY THIS

Cardoons

SURE, THEY HAVE SHAGGY LEAVES, SPINY STALKS, and look like a ragged bunch of overgrown celery, but there's a reason cardoons are prized in Italy, France, and Spain, where they often appear on holiday tables. A type of edible thistle, flavorful cardoons have an appealing, slightly bitter taste with notes of celery and artichoke (they're a relative of the latter). They're also versatile: You can eat them puréed, sautéed, braised, and fried. Pick some up from late fall through winter, and they might just make their way onto your holiday table, too.

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TRY THIS CARDOONS

They're edible and ornamental

Native to southern Europe and North Africa, cardoons (*Cynara cardunculus*) are perennial plants with fleshy, edible stalks that can grow up to 6 feet tall. They produce silvery-green leaves and flower buds that are similar to those of an artichoke, though they're usually not eaten. These buds bloom into large purple thistle-like flowers, which can provide a striking element in garden design.

The more inner stalks, the better

Cardoons grow in bunches, like celery, and should have wide, plump, gray-green stalks. Choose bunches with plenty of inner stalks, which will be more tender than those on the

outside. Refrigerate cardoons in a plastic bag for up to two weeks.

Peel first, then prep as you please

Begin by separating the cardoon bunch into stalks; discard any tough outer stalks or narrow, leafy ones from the center. Use a paring knife to trim away spines and leaves and to shave off the inedible fibrous exterior from each stalk. If you don't plan to use the peeled cardoons immediately, keep them in acidulated water (a mixture of water and an acid, such as lemon juice or vinegar) to prevent discoloration.

Parboiling trimmed cardoons before using other cooking methods will reduce their

bitter flavor and make them more tender. Parboiled cardoons can be sautéed, added to creamy gratins, braised with herbs, puréed, grilled, or lightly battered and deep-fried. You can also toss them with a vinaigrette or try them dipped in bagna cauda, an Italian sauce made with cooked anchovies and garlic. Cardoons pair well with béchamel, truffles, and truffle oil and are complemented by cheeses like Parmigiano-Reggiano (see the recipe below) and fontina. —Melissa Denchak



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cardoons with garlic butter and parmesan

These tender, juicy garlic-infused cardoons pair deliciously with everything from an elegant leg of lamb to pan-seared pork chops or chicken for a weeknight meal. Serves 4

Kosher salt

- 1 medium bunch cardoons (about 1½ lb.)
- 2 Tbs. unsalted butter
- 2 medium cloves garlic, smashed and peeled
- Pinch crushed red pepper flakes
- 3 Tbs. finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
- Freshly ground black pepper

Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil over high heat. **Meanwhile, prepare the cardoons:** Cut the base off the bunch to separate it into stalks, and discard any tough outer stalks or narrow leafy stalks from the center. With a paring knife, shave the stringy outer layer off each stalk. Cut the trimmed stalks crosswise into 1-inch pieces.

Cook the cardoons in the boiling water until tender, about 12 minutes. Drain well. (The cardoons can be prepared to this point up to 4 hours ahead.)

In a 10-inch skillet, melt the butter over medium-low heat. Add the garlic and cook over medium heat, pressing the cloves with a fork, until just beginning to color, about 2 minutes. Remove the garlic with the fork and discard.

Add the pepper flakes to the butter, wait about 15 seconds, and then add the cardoons. Cook, tossing, until heated through, about 1 minute. Toss with the Parmigiano, season to taste with salt and pepper, and serve. —Jennifer Armentrout