

BAKED ARTICHOKEs, SHRIMP AND MOZZARELLA

Adapted from "Marcella Cucina," by Marcella Hazan (HarperCollins, 1997)

Time: 1 hour 40 minutes

Juice of 1/2 lemon

5 medium artichokes

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

4 whole garlic cloves, peeled

Salt and ground black pepper

1 pound medium shrimp, peeled, cleaned, rinsed and dried

2 tablespoons butter

2 tablespoons freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

3/4 pound mozzarella, thinly sliced.

Fill a bowl with cold water and add lemon juice. Bend back outer leaves of artichokes; snap or cut off the upper rough part of each leaf. Leave tender base of each leaf attached to core. Continue to do this to expose a central cone of leaves with a pale base about 1 1/2 inches high. Pare away the rough green base and coarse outer part of stem of each artichoke. Detach stems, halve

lengthwise if they are thick, and place in bowl of lemon water. Halve or quarter each artichoke. Using a small knife and spoon, remove and discard any prickly leaves and the fuzzy choke at the base of each piece. Slice artichokes as thinly as possible, and add to bowl.

2. Place oil and garlic in a large (preferably nonstick) skillet over high heat. Sauté garlic until nut-brown, then discard. Drain artichokes, rinse with two changes of water, and drain well. Add artichoke slices and stems to hot oil, and sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste. Turn to coat well with oil, cover, and reduce heat to low. Cook for 5 minutes, add 1/4 cup water and mix well. Continue cooking over low heat, mixing frequently, until tender when prodded with a fork, 30 to 45 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, place a rack in upper third

of oven and preheat to 450 degrees. Using 1 to 2 teaspoons butter, lightly butter a baking dish 11 by 7 inches and 2 inches high (or roughly the equivalent). Spread cooked artichokes across pan, then spread evenly with shrimp. Sprinkle with salt to taste and 1 tablespoon grated cheese. Top with mozzarella slices, slightly overlapping them if necessary. If not using buffalo mozzarella, which contains salt, sprinkle with salt. Top with remaining 1 tablespoon cheese. Cut remaining butter into tiny dots and sprinkle on top.

4. Bake in upper third of oven until mozzarella melts and is flecked with brown, about 20 minutes. Remove from heat and allow to rest a few minutes. Serve warm. Some liquid may collect in bottom of dish. If desired, serve with crusty bread for sopping up these juices.

Yield: 6 servings.