

Cat Cora's Kitchen

Contributed by Cat Cora

It's no surprise Cat Cora became a world renowned chef. Her culinary aspirations began at an early age, and by 15, she had developed a business plan for her own restaurant. In 2005, she made television history on Food Network's Iron Chef America as the first and only female Iron Chef, and in November 2006 Bon Appetit Magazine bestowed her with their Teacher of the Year Award, an award she calls, "the greatest recognition she could achieve as a chef." That month, she was also honored with another great culinary distinction when she was named Executive Chef of the magazine.

There is no doubt Cat's upbringing had an influence on her career. She was raised in a small Greek community in Jackson, Mississippi, by a family for whom cooking and eating were the center of life. At the Cora house, it was common to eat spices from the South, as well as fresh sheep and goat cheeses and home-cured olives sent by relatives from the island of Skopelos. Her first cookbook, Cat Cora's Kitchen was inspired by her Greek and Southern heritage and contains many of her families' favorite recipes. Cat is part of Macy's Culinary Council, a national culinary authority, comprising 15 of the world's most prominent chefs. The Council serves as the face of Macy's Culinary and Housewares divisions, impacting how customers are inspired to shop, cook and eat at home.

Outside of the kitchen, Cat is known for her philanthropy. She is President and Founder of Chefs for Humanity, an organization which was founded in response to the 2004 Tsunami disaster. Modeled after Doctors Without Borders, the not-for-profit gathers the culinary community together to raise funds and provide resources for important emergency, educational and hunger-related causes. In addition to this, she recently became the nutritional spokesperson for UNICEF. Cat has, also, launched a second book, *Cooking From The Hip: Fast, Easy, Phenomenal Meals* (Houghton Mifflin) elevating at-home cooking to new levels. The book applies her "go-with-what-you've got" philosophy to creating simple, yet sensational meals.

Artichoke Hearts Braised in Lemon Juice

Anginares Me Latholemono

Serves 4 to 6

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

½ cup fresh lemon juice

¼ cup dry white wine

2 TBS chopped fresh thyme leaves or 2 tsp dried thyme

1 TBS kosher salt

1 tsp freshly ground black pepper

3 cloves garlic, minced

1 bay leaf

10 large artichokes

2 lemons, halved

Preheat the oven to 350F.

In a Dutch oven or flameproof roasting pan, combine all the ingredients except the artichokes and lemon halves.

Working with 1 artichoke at a time, pull off and discard the small bottom leaves. Snap off the thick outer leaves by bending them back and pulling them down toward the stem; the meaty lower section of each leaf should remain anchored to the heart of the artichoke. Continue removing the leaves until those remaining are tender and yellow. Cut off about 2/3 of the tops of the remaining leaves (to where the meaty part of the heart begins) then cut off the stem where it meets the base. Trim around the base of the artichoke heart to smooth the sides and remove any dark green leaves that are not tender. Scoop out the fuzzy choke with a small spoon. Squeeze lemon juice over the heart and add to the pan with the braising liquid. Repeat with the remaining artichokes, spooning the braising liquid over the other hearts in the pan each time you complete an artichoke.

Bring the artichokes and liquid to a boil on top of the stove. Cover the pot with a lid or aluminum foil and transfer to the oven. Braise until the hearts are tender when pierced with a knife, 30-45 minutes.

Remove the pan from the oven, uncover, and let the artichokes cool in the braising liquid. Serve warm, or refrigerate and serve chilled. The artichokes will keep, refrigerated in their liquid in a container with a tight-fitting lid, for up to 3 weeks.

Enjoy!

Recipes are credited to Cat Cora's books:

Cat Cora's Kitchen, and Cooking From the Hip.

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