

MAKE 'EM BEG FOR MORE

FRIED ARTICHOKE HEARTS

In the sixteenth century, women were forbidden from eating the provocative artichoke. It was considered an aphrodisiac with bewitching sexual powers. Centuries later, in 1947, a little-known Hollywood starlet named Marilyn Monroe was crowned Miss Artichoke Queen of Castroville, California. The lovely choke is still sexy after all these years.

Feeds 2

1 (9-ounce) package frozen artichokes,	Hearty dose of freshly ground black pepper
1 (14-ounce) can, or 6 fresh baby artichokes	Large pinch of cayenne pepper
1 egg, beaten	1 clove garlic, minced
1/2 cup unseasoned bread crumbs or panko	Olive oil, for frying
1/4 cup grated Parmesan or Pecorino Romano cheese	Salt
1 teaspoon dried parsley or a few sprigs of fresh parsley, minced	Lemon wedges

Frozen artichokes will work fine here; just thaw according to package directions. Canned artichokes will also do in a pinch; rinse well, drain, and pat dry. If available, fresh baby artichokes are sublime. Wash, trim the tops, pull off the tough outer leaves, slice them in half lengthwise, remove the fuzz with a spoon, rub with lemon, and drop in boiling salted water for 5 minutes. Drain and pat dry.

Place the artichokes in a bowl and douse in beaten egg. Mix together the bread crumbs, cheese, parsley, black pepper, cayenne, and garlic in a plastic bag. Shake excess egg off the artichokes and drop them in the bag, then give the bag a good shake. Remove the chokes and shake excess crumbs off.

Heat the oil in large skillet over medium heat. Ease the chokes in, a few at a time, giving them room to breathe. Don't crowd those little darlings. Fry for 6 minutes, turning once. Plate those crispy critters, and hit them with salt and a squirt of lemon. Get sexy.
