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Stuffed Artichokes

INGREDIENTS:

SERVES 6

10 ounces top-quality ground beef
1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons grated
Parmigiano Reggiano
Leaves of 1 sprig parsley, minced
1 (2- to 3-inch) square piece of crustless stale
bread, soaked in water and squeezed dry
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
Juice of 2 lemons
18 artichokes
Extra-virgin olive oil for sautéing
1 cup diced smoked pancetta
2 cups whole peeled tomatoes

INSTRUCTIONS:

Combine the beef, grated cheese, and parsley. Tear the bread into the mixture and season with salt and pepper. Stir to combine.

In a bowl, combine the lemon juice with cold water. Remove and peel the stems of the artichokes. Remove and discard the hard outer leaves and chokes. Carve out the hearts of the artichokes, leaving the rest intact. Drop the artichokes, their hearts, and their stems into the water as you prepare them. Drain artichoke stems and hearts and chop roughly.

Place a generous amount of oil in a pot over medium heat and add the pancetta. Add the chopped artichoke stems and hearts, peeled tomatoes, and salt and pepper. Cook until tender and combined.

Stuff the artichoke bodies with the beef mixture and arrange them in a pot so that they are supporting each other and standing up vertically. Gently pour the pancetta mixture over them. Cook over medium heat, occasionally basting them with the cooking liquid that forms in the bottom of the pot. If the pot appears to be drying out, add a little water. Cook until the bases of the artichokes are tender and easily pierced with a knife, about 40 minutes. Place 3 artichokes standing vertically on each of 6 individual serving plates and drizzle with cooking liquid.



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