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Farro, artichokes, and king trumpets soup

Excerpted from Italy by Ingredient, Artisanal Foods, Modern Recipes by Viola Buitoni (Rizzoli). Copyright © 2023

This is the first of two recipes in this chapter featuring farro with mushrooms. These two ingredients join in a canvas that spins charming tableaux across space and time. We are in mid to late spring with this soup, originating from a version that was part of my brother's wedding buffet in 1990. Oyster and king trumpet mushrooms are abundant, while artichokes are at their tail end, too tough for salads and steaming but still well suited for longer cooking preparations. Green garlic completes the seasonal picture. A pearled farro is the best choice for this dish. If you cannot find green garlic, use a clove or two of regular garlic or a small shallot.

FOR 4 PEOPLE

- 1 lemon
- 6 medium-size artichokes, or 12 to 15 baby ones
- 1 pound / 450 g king trumpet or oyster mushrooms
- 1 green garlic stalk (see headnote for substitution)
- Salt and pepper
- 2 strips marjoram
- 1 cup / 170 g semi-pearled farro
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for finishing
- 1 cup / 240 ml dry white wine
- Grated aged pecorino, for serving

1. Cut the lemon in half and squeeze the juice into a bowl of cold water. Drop the squeezed lemon halves into the water.
2. Pick up the first artichoke and remove the outer leaves until about two-thirds of the outer circle of leaves are a lighter, somewhat yellowish green. Slice off the darker tips of the leaves close to the top, being mindful of the thorns. Pare the outer part of the bottom and peel the stem. Finally, slice off a very thin layer from the bottom of the stem. This procedure is called turning, as for each phase of it, your knife will circle around the artichoke.
3. Cut the turned artichoke in half lengthwise and remove the choke if necessary. The choke is that hay-like fuzz that is often, but not always, in the middle of an artichoke. Thinly slice each half lengthwise and drop them into the lemon water to prevent oxidation. Perform the turning procedure on all the remaining artichokes. Rub your hands and fingers all over with the lemon halves to remove the bitterness. Wash them well with soap and water. Do not forgo this last step, lest the bitter residue travels to other ingredients your hands will touch.
4. Wipe the mushrooms clean with a paper towel, trim the very bottom of the stems, and slice them thinly. Clean the green garlic much like you would a scallion: trim off the bottom hairy root and the top third of the green leaves and remove the outer layer. Mince the cleaned garlic into a paste with 1 teaspoon salt. Strip the marjoram leaves and chop them finely. Place the farro in a colander, pick it over, and rinse it.
5. Pour the olive oil into a saucepan with the green garlic and half of the marjoram. Set over medium-low heat and stand by the stove to closely tend to the garlic and prevent it from burning. Drain the artichokes and shake off the excess moisture.
6. In 3 to 4 minutes, when the garlic looks hazy and its fragrance is intoxicating, add the sliced artichokes and mushrooms and mix well. When the mushrooms begin to sweat and wilt, stir in the farro then raise the heat to medium-high. Douse with the wine. Wait until the wine's alcoholic punch to your nose has turned into a sugary caress to your eyes. Cover abundantly with warm water and bring to a boil.
7. Lower the heat until the soup is at a simmer. Sample a spoonful of the liquid and adjust the salt to suit your taste. Cover and simmer for 20 to 30 minutes, until the farro

is quite tender and the vegetables are well cooked. You may need to add more warm water along the way.

8. This is a dense and hearty soup. If you prefer soupier soups, you can accentuate its brothiness with some warm water. Just remember to rebalance the seasoning that may have gotten diluted in plain water.
9. Serve warm, finished with a thread of olive oil and dusted with the remaining marjoram. Offer the pecorino at the table for those eaters who would like some.