

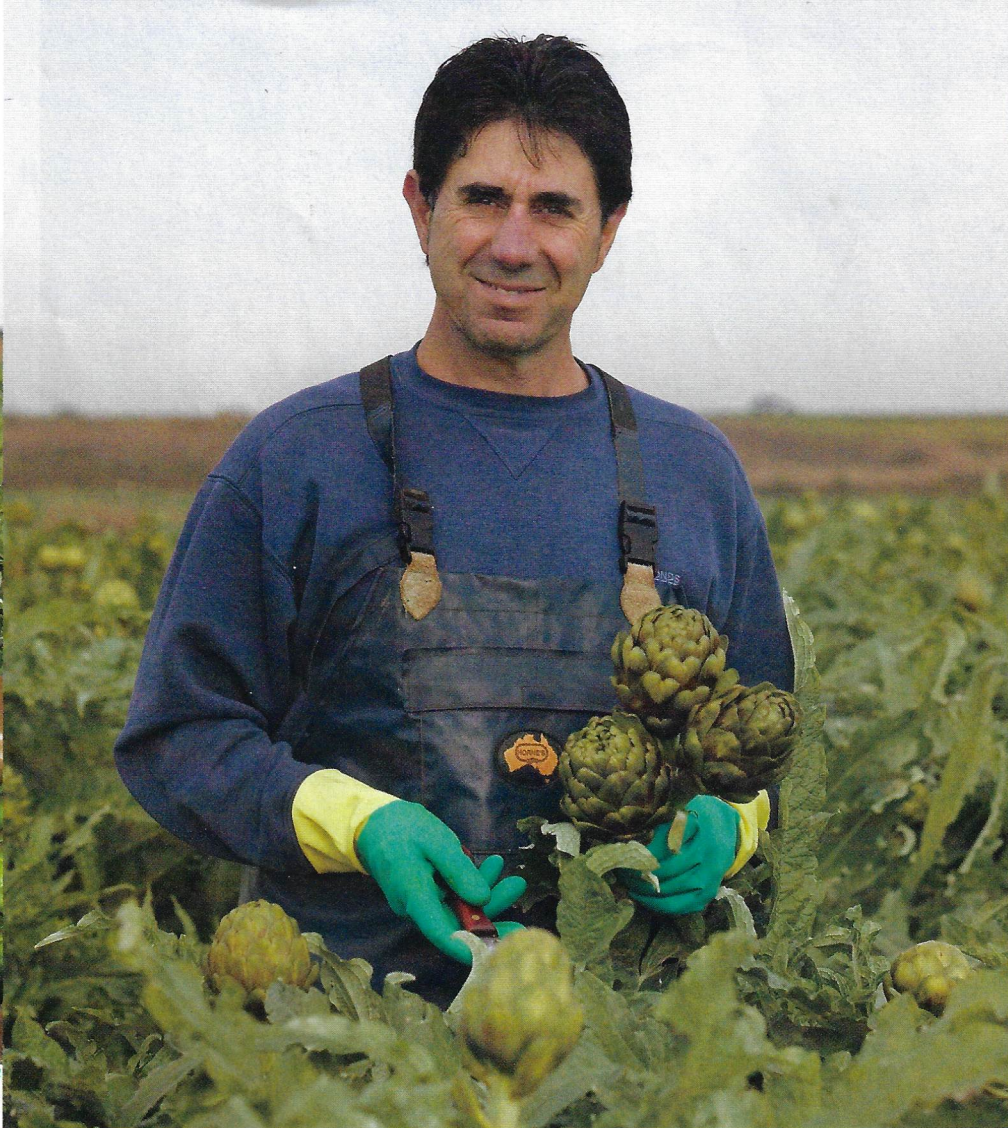
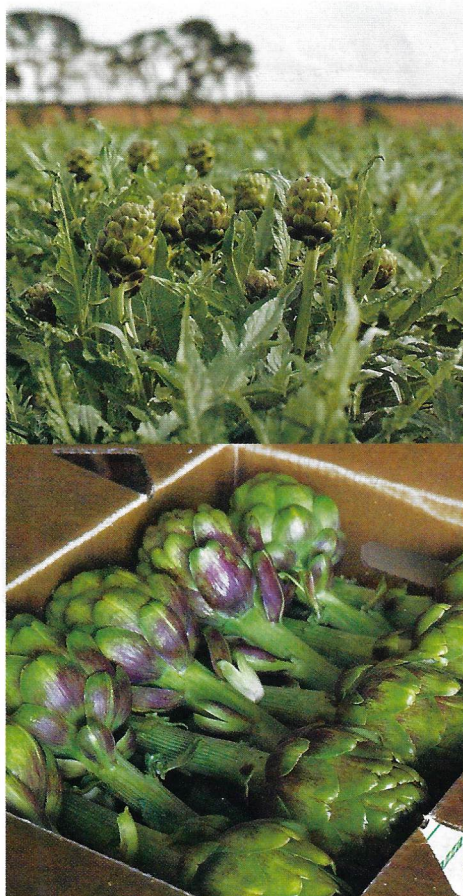


OUR GROWER'S STORY

# AROUND THE GLOBE

THEY MAY LOOK A LITTLE  
THISTLY, BUT FARMER ROSS  
MAZZA SAYS GLOBE ARTICHOKES  
REALLY ARE TENDER AT HEART.  
ANNA SCOBIE REPORTS.





salt and pepper. You put the stuffing between the leaves so that as you eat the flesh from the outer leaves, you get the filling as well. As you get further inside towards the heart, you get more and more of the artichoke flesh."

Ross's father, Giovanni, started growing artichokes when he bought the 15 hectare farm in 1945. Market gardening was in its heyday back then, so Giovanni grew a little bit of everything, as did most of his neighbours. But by the time Ross took over it was more economical to specialise in one or two crops. The Mazzas continued with artichokes because they were one of Giovanni's favourites and well suited to the region's slightly saline soil and coastal climate.

"Dad was one of the leaders in the early days of growing artichokes – he was very well known for them. But the thing he loved most about them was that you don't have to bend down low to pick them!" laughs Ross. "I really enjoy picking them but I also like the process of growing them – it's a joy to watch."

Artichokes are traditionally a spring vegetable, but Ross is growing a new variety called Imperial Star (patent variety) that is ready for picking in mid-winter. "We harvest the bulk of the crop in July, August and September – it peaks around the footy grand final – but we can still be picking up until Christmas time. We usually harvest about 300,000 to 500,000 artichoke heads per season."

When Giovanni retired, Ross found it was too much for him to run the farm and also manage the sales side of the business. So when he met Tony Simonetta in 1976, the timing could not have been better. "When I was introduced to Tony, we shook hands and liked each other right from the start. We have been doing business ever since." Tony became Ross's agent for the artichokes, handling all of the sales and marketing.

Three years later, Tony set up Perfection Fresh, which has since become a leading supplier of a wide range of fruit and vegetables – Ross's artichokes included.

W

hen Ross Mazza started running the family farm in South Werribee, Victoria, in 1975, one of his main crops was globe artichokes.

This unusual vegetable is actually the flower bud of a large, thistle-like plant and although it had long been popular in Mediterranean countries, it was relatively unknown to most Australians.

"My parents are from Sicily, so I grew up eating artichokes," says Ross (pictured above). "During the season, Mum would cook them almost weekly. My wife, Josephine, prepares them a similar way now – stuffed with breadcrumbs, eggs, parsley,





**"Artichokes can be added raw, whole, sliced, or quartered to stews, casseroles and soups. In addition, they can be chilled and sliced to be used in salads."**

COLIN HUDGSON  
BUSINESS MANAGER FRESH PRODUCE

Tony's three sons, Michael, Vince and John now work for the company as well, in the roles of CEO, Director of Sales and Chief Operations Officer respectively.

"Ross has been a key supplier of ours for many years, and is one of the best in his field," says Michael. "When we first started with artichokes, the average Australian consumer knew very little about this strange looking vegetable. But with Ross's help, and with the help of Woolworths, we have tried to bring the artichoke to greater prominence."

Perfection Fresh began supplying vegetables to Woolworths in late 1987, and approached the company about stocking artichokes in the early nineties. "We asked if they would help us make the average Australian more aware

of them, and they were very happy to do that," says Michael.

Artichokes have become increasingly popular, but they're not quite mainstream yet.

For those who haven't yet sampled their unique flavour, here is what to do. Trim artichoke stems to about 6cm and remove the coarse lower leaves. Trim about 2cm from the top of the globes and then boil, steam or bake them.

You eat artichokes with your fingers, pulling out the leaves and scraping the fleshy side against your teeth. The heart itself is entirely edible, as is the inner part of the stem. They are often served with sauces such as hollandaise, vinaigrette or melted butter to dip the leaves in.



## Globe artichoke & roasted capsicum salad

Prep: 45 minutes

Cooking: 1 hour 15 minutes Serves: 4

**8 globe artichokes**  
**4 red capsicums**  
**cos lettuce**  
**½ cup red onion, sliced**  
**½ cup olives**  
**⅓ cup balsamic vinegar**  
**¼ cup white wine vinegar**  
**2 garlic cloves, minced**  
**1 tbs fresh basil, chopped**  
**1 tbs fresh rosemary, chopped**

**1** Slice artichoke tops off crosswise. Trim stems and thorns and discard lower leaves. Boil or steam for about 30 minutes.

**2** Drain and cool. Halve lengthways and scoop out centre. Remove outer leaves. Trim hearts and slice thinly. Cover and set aside.

**3** Grill whole capsicums until charred on all sides. Remove and place in a paper bag for 15 minutes to steam skins. Remove stems, seeds and ribs. Peel off skin and slice capsicum into strips. Reserve a quarter of the strips for dressing.

**4** To assemble salad, arrange lettuce leaves on a plate. Top with sliced artichoke hearts, capsicum strips, onion and olives.

**5** For dressing, process reserved capsicum with vinegars, garlic, basil and rosemary until well blended and nearly smooth. Drizzle over salads.



# ARTICHOKES

**To buy** Look for heavy, compact, plump heads. The leaves and the stems should show no signs of browning or loosening. Artichokes are comprised of fleshy gold-green to purple coloured leaves, surrounding a hairy, inedible 'choke', on top of an edible, tender heart.

**To store** It's best to enjoy artichokes as soon as possible after purchase. Store them in a plastic bag in the crisper section of your refrigerator for 2 to 3 days.

**Where to find** In the fresh produce section in store at Woolworths.

## TIPS & HINTS

- \* It is best not to boil artichokes in an iron or aluminium pot. Doing so can discolour them. To boil, have a pot ready filled with salted, boiling water, and a squeeze of lemon.
- \* Make a hollandaise sauce by melting 150g butter then allowing to cool. Process 2 egg yolks and 1 tbs white wine vinegar in a processor. With processor running, slowly pour in butter. Stir in 1 tbs lemon juice. Boil artichokes until just tender. Serve with hollandaise sauce, to dip leaves into.

## Baked artichokes with cheese filling

Preparation: 30 minutes

Cooking: 30 minutes

Serves: 6

### 6 artichokes

**1 lemon, juiced and zested**

**2 tsp Bertolli olive oil**

**1 onion, finely chopped**

**1 cups dried breadcrumbs**

**2 tbs chopped parsley**

**¼ cup grated parmesan**

**¼ cup grated Swiss cheese**

**salt & pepper**

**1 cup dry white wine**

**1** Wash artichokes and trim about 3cm from the tops. Discard the tough, outer leaves and trim the stems. Using either your fingers or a spoon, carefully remove the centre or choke (it looks like fine hairs). Immediately submerge the artichokes into a large bowl of cold water to which you have

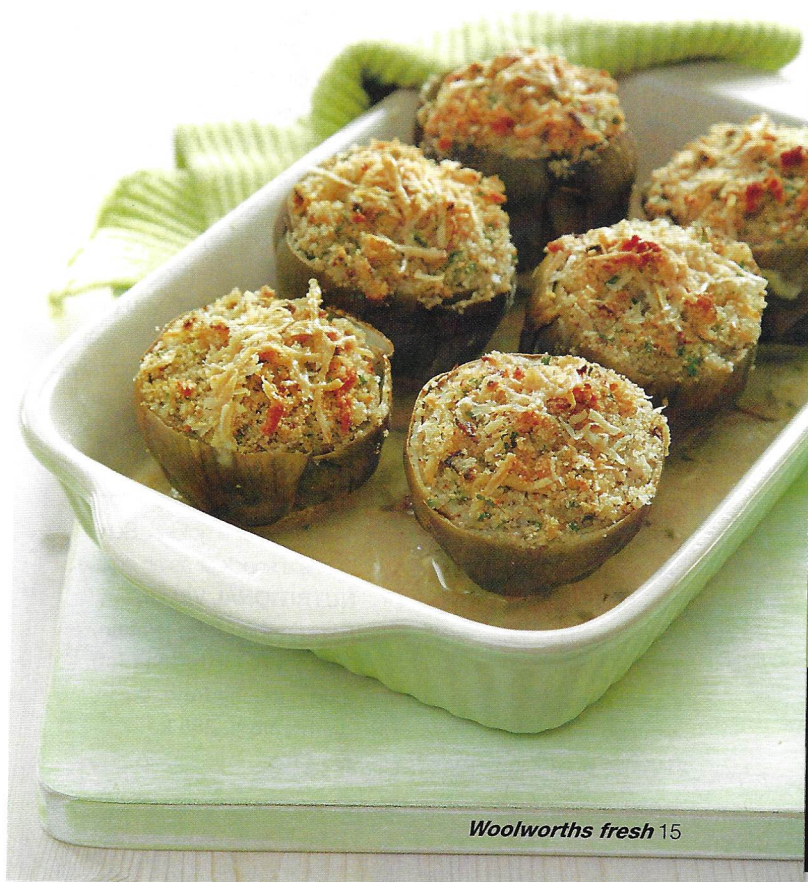
added the lemon juice.

**2** To make the filling, heat the oil in a frying pan over medium heat. Add the onion and cook until soft. Combine in a bowl with lemon zest, breadcrumbs, parsley, parmesan and Swiss cheese. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

**3** Remove artichokes from the water and drain well. Using a teaspoon, fill each artichoke with the prepared mixture. Arrange in a small baking dish and add wine. Cover and bake for 20 minutes, then uncover for a further 10 minutes until golden. Serve as a side dish with pan-fried veal.

### NUTRITIONAL VALUE

**Per serve: 11g protein, 6g fat (2.5g saturated fat), 18g carbohydrate, 2.5g dietary fibre, 700 kJ (165 Cals).**



Woolworths fresh 15



## MEDITERRANEAN PROMOTION

# FLAVOURS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

Come join us as we celebrate 10 years of our **Fresh Flavours of the Mediterranean Promotion**. From July 31 through to September 3, there are plenty of opportunities to experience the Mediterranean first hand when you visit a Woolworths store. Australia-wide, we have organised over 10,000 hours of in store demonstrations and taste testing to introduce you to delicious food ideas and products from the Mediterranean. So take some time out to treat your tastebuds and do the shopping all in one go!

Look out for Product Information cards in the fresh fruit and vegie section for more info about our Mediterranean produce.



### Meatballs with **mediterranean** tomato sauce, rocket & spinach salad

Serves: 4 Prep: 30 minutes  
Cooking: 35 minutes

**75g Danish feta cheese**  
**3 tbs Bertolli extra virgin olive oil**  
**1 red onion, finely chopped**  
**500g Heart Smart beef mince**  
**2 garlic cloves, finely chopped**  
**2 tbs chopped fresh basil leaves, plus extra leaves to garnish**  
**Salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**1 fennel bulb, roughly chopped**  
**400g can La Gina diced tomatoes**  
**150g Always Fresh Fire Roasted Red Pepper Strips, roughly chopped**  
**1 bag Complete Rocket and Spinach Salad Kit**

1. Cut 12 x 1cm squares from feta, crumble remaining cheese.
2. Heat 1 tbs Bertolli extra virgin olive oil in large frying pan. Add onion, fry over medium

heat for approximately 5 minutes or until soft.

3. Transfer to a bowl (setting pan aside for later), add beef, garlic, basil, salt and pepper. Mix well, then form into 12 balls. Poke a hole in the middle of each one, insert piece of feta, smooth hole over.

4. Heat 1 tbs of oil in the pan, add fennel. Fry gently, covered for approximately 10 minutes until soft. Remove fennel.

5. Add remaining oil to pan, increase heat, add meatballs. Fry, turning regularly using tongs until brown on outside.

6. Add fennel, tomatoes, capsicum, salt and pepper, simmer over low heat, covered for 10 minutes.

7. Uncover, simmer further 5 minutes.

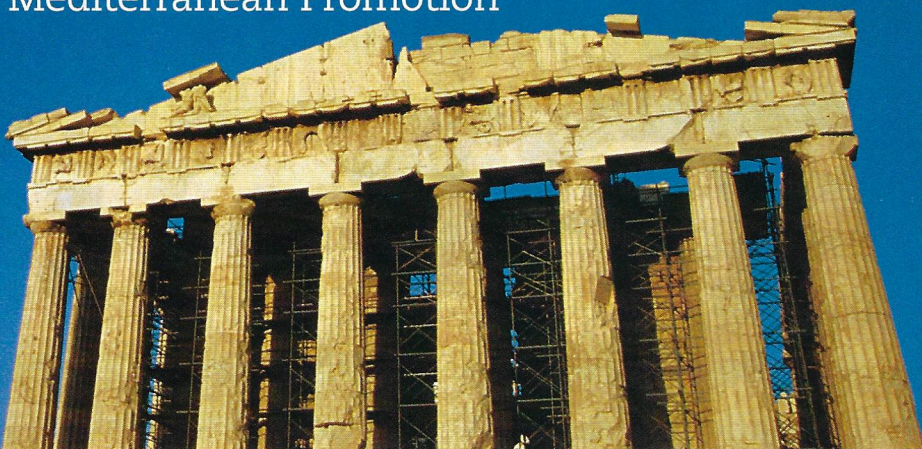
8. Serve scattered with crumbled feta and basil, accompanied by rocket and spinach salad, drizzled with balsamic and olive dressing.



For more info on the **Fresh Flavours of the Mediterranean**, log on to [www.medvegies.com.au](http://www.medvegies.com.au).

Celebrating 10 years of the Mediterranean Promotion

# WIN ONE OF 10 TRIPS FOR TWO TO ATHENS!



To enter purchase the August issue of *australian good taste* on sale July 26

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