

Feature by Elizabeth Rhodes & Christine Birk
Photography by Helena Yankovska
Illustration, right
Miguel Angel
Icon Illustration, below
Miguel Angel



Planet : Mars

Perennial

Flowering Season: August-September | Season: November-March



Powers

Men may carry this herb to enhance their lovemaking skills. Dried thistles are great for making wands.

Magical Uses

Protection spells, rituals for strength and courage in the face of adversity.



Shelf Life

Given their season, Cardoons are often seen in recipes around the holidays. Cardoons are often sold as vegetable preserves in brine or water, so they can be enjoyed year-round.



Medicinal Profile

The compound found in cardoons called cynarin gives a bitter taste to the leaves of this plant. Used fresh or dried, the leaves containing cynarin treat many digestive issues as well as improving liver and gallbladder functions.



Gender

The flowers are hermaphroditic, so they reflect both aspects.



Flavor Profile

Subtly sweet, green flavor. Bright, verdant, crisp, creamy. The leaves are bitter.



Cynara Cardunculus The Cardoon

Cardi in Italian or cardoni in French.

Found in the wild along the Mediterranean, from Morocco and Portugal to Libya and Croatia, a cardoon is a thistle that tastes like a bitter version of a giant artichoke with small, prickly flower heads. But unlike an artichoke, you eat the stems and not the flower buds. Cardoons look like large celery and it has a fresh green taste. Think of it as a bit like the love child of overgrown celery and artichoke hearts.

IN YOUR KITCHEN

Artichokes (left) and Cardoons are both in the Asteraceae family.

Chef Christine Birk, bringing the tastiest and healthiest whole food, plant-based goodness to Los Angeles, shares her tips on preparing cardoons.

Sources for Continued Research :
NaturalMedicinalHerbs.net, Alchemy-Works.com, The New York Times "The Cardoon: A Stranger In the Kitchen".

Cardoon soup (zuppa di cardi) : This is a classic Italian recipe that will truly show the essence of the cardoon's flavor.

Cardoon au gratin : A play on a classic casserole with bread-crumbs, cheese and the addition of cardoons for a fresher flavor.

Braised Cardoons with pine nuts and thyme : A great and simple vegetable side dish. Prepare by taking off the thorns and ribs, chopping them and placing in broth with thyme, braising slowly on the stovetop or oven, similar to how you would braise fennel.

Roman style fried cardoons : A fun way to eat cardoons. Batter then fry them in oil and eat like the Romans do.

Cardoon fritters : Make them pakora style with chickpea flour or a classic fritter style by mixing them with wheat flour a la a zucchini fritter. ||A