



# Sunchoke

Theories abound about how Jerusalem artichokes or sunchokes got their name. They are actually native to America and are not related to artichokes. They are a part of the sunflower family and some say that “Jerusalem” came from girasole, Italian for sunflower. When introduced to Europe, the Jerusalem artichoke was readily accepted while the potato was ignored. Eventually, potatoes gained popularity and

Jerusalem artichokes were viewed as something to be eaten by the less fortunate. Perhaps this was reinforced by the fact that they were heavily relied on for sustenance during the world wars. They never really gained favor in the U.S., which is a shame because they are unique among root vegetables in that they contain no starch. Instead they are made up of inulins which, according to Waverly Root, “might be described a little freely as a form of sugar which can be tolerated by diabetics”. My theory is that this is why sunchokes caramelize so nicely when you bake them!

Sunchokes grow very tall and after the small, yellow flowers form, the roots begin to swell. Like other roots, they become sweeter after the first frost. Sunchoke season is in late fall but Harmony Valley continued to offer them in a CSA extension as late as January. Sunchokes can also be overwintered in the field and dug as an early spring vegetable. Either way, as the tubers are stored, either in the ground or in a cooler, at very cold temperatures, their sweetness greatly increases.

At Harmony Valley, we grow white and red sunchokes. The white, a French variety, tend to be longer and smoother, i.e. easier to peel! The red are more bulbous and knobby, more closely resembling the American varieties. They are very similar in flavor so you can choose according to how you will use them. Sunchokes are very versatile because they can be eaten raw in salads, boiled, roasted or even pickled.

Sunchokes became my new favorite last summer. My epiphany happened when I made a root bake with potatoes, turnips, celeriac, parsnip, rutabagas and sunchokes. I found myself obsessively picking out the crunchy, caramelized bits of sunchoke over any of the other veggies. Perhaps if you are trying them for the first time, you too should try them roasted.



If you are tired of boring old home fries, this recipe is the antidote. It would be perfect with brunch or with lentil or beef burgers.

## Sunchoke Home Fries with Cilantro and Jalapeno

- 1 lb. sunchokes
- ¼ c. olive oil
- salt
- 1 red pepper, diced
- 1 fresh jalapeno, seeded, minced
- 1 medium shallot
- 2 Tbsp. cilantro, chopped

Peel the sunchokes and slice them thinly, placing them into water as you go.  
Heat 3 Tbsp. of oil in a large skillet. See other side.

Some people think sunchokes taste like artichokes. I find the similarity to be fleeting. In this recipe, though, the lemon accentuates the similarity and because of the softness of the sunchokes, you can almost close your eyes and imagine you are eating artichoke hearts. This salad is best eaten immediately, before the dressing is fully absorbed and the pine nuts lose their crispness.

## Sunchoke Salad

- 12 medium sunchokes
- 2 oz. pine nuts
- juice of 1 lemon
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- salt
- 2 Tbsp. chopped parsley see other side for directions.

*Recipes and information provided by Lee Davenport for Harmony Valley Farm.  
For more information go to [www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com](http://www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com)*

# A Midwestern Palette - Eating With the Seasons

Though many fresh foods are available year round, our regional agricultural community, and the urban communities surrounded by them, benefit when we choose to eat seasonally, from local producers. Knowing the seasonality of our favorite produce allows us to make informed choices.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Stored Sunchokes			Spring-dug sunchokes						Fall harvested sunchokes		

Sunchokes are available freshly dug in late fall. They store very well, actually improving in flavor when stored properly, and are in stores all winter long. Crops not harvested in fall can be dug early in the spring and, like the stored tubers, are sweeter than the freshly dug fall sunchokes. They are less commonly stored and sold in mid-summer.

## Preparation and Storage Tips

Sunchokes should be stored in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. They are an excellent keeper and while they will eventually get soft, you can easily store them for at least a month.

While many recipes call for peeling, their skins are thin and a good scrubbing will work in most cases. If you are using the knobbier types, be sure to get between the cracks or slice off some knobs to make the cracks more accessible to your brush.

A favorite way to eat them is in a root vegetable mash. They are delicious added to mashed potatoes or a more complex mix including celeriac and parsnips. If you really want to avoid peeling, roasting is an easy way to prepare sunchokes. All you have to do is scrub them well, chop them into uniform pieces and bake on a lightly greased tray, flipping them occasionally so they brown on all sides. When adding sunchokes to recipes, replacing part or all of the potato, remember, sunchokes do not contain starch and give off more moisture than potatoes. Adjust accordingly.

Sunchokes lend themselves to pickling. They remain crunchy and readily absorb the pickling flavors. Slice them and try them in your favorite refrigerator or jarred pickle recipe.

Add drained sunchokes and sprinkle with salt. Cook over medium heat until they begin to soften and caramelize. Remove from pan and set aside.

Heat remaining Tbsp. of oil. Sauté the shallots at high heat until they just begin to brown. Add the peppers and cook until just tender. Add the sunchokes, and cilantro and season to taste.

Serves 4.

Boil the sunchokes until soft. Drain and peel. The skin can be pulled off in a sheath. Dice the sunchokes. Toast the pine nuts in a 300 degree oven until just beginning to brown. Toss the sunchokes with the rest of the ingredients and serve warm.

**Harmony Valley Farm** is a family owned farm in western Wisconsin, dedicated to producing high quality, beautifully clean, and deliciously fresh certified organic produce. Our farming methods protect the environment and enhance diversity.