



SPANISH-JAPANESE FUSION · CATALAN ARTICHOKE TRADITION · SIDE ·  
VEGETABLE CENTERPIECE · SPRING TAPA · FUSION-INFLECTED COURSE

# Alcachofas a la Brasa con Miso-Ajo

Whole fresh artichokes, trimmed to a tulip, par-cooked in salted water with lemon, then split and grilled face-down directly over kamado embers until the flesh absorbs the char. Finished with a white-miso-and-black-garlic butter that melts into every leaf. The Dabíz Muñoz move — Spanish vegetable, Japanese fermentation, the two traditions meeting in a single smoky bite.

Protein Vegetarian · becomes rich with the miso-butter (dairy + fermented legume)

Serves 6 as tapa · 4 as substantial side · 2 as vegetable main

Difficulty Intermediate

Active 25 min (trim + par-boil + grill + compose butter)

Total 50 min (15 min trim + 10 min par-boil + 15 min kamado bring-up)

## THE STORY

### When a Vegetable Earns the Centerpiece Slot

There is a doctrine in the modern Madrid avant-garde: no ingredient is 'just a side dish.' Every plate earns its spot on the table by adding something the main course cannot. Applied to vegetables, this philosophy produces dishes that are often more memorable than the protein courses they accompany. A tomato salad plated with wagyu dashi. A scorched cabbage with miso crème fraîche. Artichokes, grilled over live coals, with a compound butter of white miso and aged black garlic.

This is the artichoke version of that move. Alcachofas are a Spanish vegetable tradition — Cataluña and Aragón are the heartlands, with *alcachofa de Tudela* holding DOP protection. The traditional Spanish preparation is a la plancha or fried, then served with alioli. This recipe takes that tradition and bends it 20° toward Japan: the finishing butter is not alioli, but a white-miso compound butter tinted dark by aged black garlic, with a touch of usukuchi shoyu and yuzu zest. The spirit is Spanish (live fire, simple cut, centerpiece respect for the vegetable). The finish is the Spanish-Japanese fusion line.

What makes it work: artichokes carry smoke beautifully. The hollow cups created when you split them are designed to hold a finishing sauce. The char from the kamado adds a bitter-sweet element that white miso's sweet-umami balance grabs onto. The black garlic adds tertiary sweetness + the visual contrast of near-black streaks against the pale artichoke flesh. Every bite tastes different — leaf-end is nutty-bitter, heart is rich-creamy, butter pools in hollows, char crunches on the cut edge.

Artichokes are in peak season twice a year in Miami: late winter (February-March, fresh from California) and mid-summer (imported Spanish). Outside those windows, frozen artichoke hearts work but lose the whole-artichoke-on-the-grill visual drama. Plan the recipe for the season.

# Specs

<p>PORTIONS</p> <p><b>8 artichokes split in half · 6 tapa / 4 side / 2 main</b></p>	<p>KEY TECHNIQUE</p> <p><b>Par-boil then direct-fire kamado char + compound butter</b></p>	<p>PAR-BOIL TEMP</p> <p>Gentle simmer 95 °C in salted acidulated water · 8 - 10 min</p>	<p>KAMADO TEMP</p> <p>Direct hot - 350 - 400 °C grate, open ember bed</p>
<p>GRILL DURATION</p> <p>3 - 4 min face-down + 2 min leaf-side down</p>	<p>DIFFICULTY</p> <p><b>Intermediate</b> ●●●○○</p>	<p>ACTIVE TIME</p> <p><b>25 min</b></p>	<p>VESSEL</p> <p><b>Stockpot for par-boil + Kamado direct heat</b></p>
<p>CUISINE</p> <p><b>Spanish-Japanese fusion</b></p>	<p>PAIRING</p> <p><b>Junmai sake (chilled) · OR Txakoli · OR dry Fino sherry</b></p>	<p>SEASON</p> <p><b>February-March (Spanish peak) · mid-summer (US peak) · plan ahead</b></p>	<p>RULE</p> <p><b>Trim hard. Par-boil until heart-tender. Char face-down. Butter at the table.</b></p>

UMAMI ADAPTATION

## What Changed & Why

**Two tiers, one Dabíz-lane doctrine.** Everyday uses supermarket globe artichokes (California-grown, reliable) and good-quality white miso from an Asian market or Whole Foods. No Limits uses Spanish alcachofa de Tudela DOP when in season (late Feb-March, shipped in from La Tienda or a specialty fishmonger with Spanish pantry

program), Saikyo white miso (the sweet Kyoto variety), and DIY black garlic from UMAMI-8. The black garlic is the flavor-multiplier — commercial black garlic is acceptable but DIY is better.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
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## INGREDIENTS

# What You Need

### Everyday

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## No Limits

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## EQUIPMENT

### Your Kit

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- Kamado grill (Pablo ✓) — essential for the char finish

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- Lump charcoal — 2 kg for hot direct zone

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- Large stockpot (6 L+) for par-boil

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- Sharp paring knife (for trimming artichokes)

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- Kitchen shears (for cutting leaf tips)

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- Large bowl of cold acidulated water (lemon water) — for holding trimmed artichokes

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- Sharp chef's knife (for splitting)

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- Small mixing bowl for the compound butter

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- Silicone spatula + rubber scraper

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- Long tongs for the grill

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- Fish spatula or wide thin spatula (for lifting delicate grilled halves)

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- Slotted spoon (for removing from par-boil)

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- Warmed serving platter

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- Small ramekin for the finishing butter (placed at table)

#### MISE EN PLACE

## Before You Start

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- Trim the artichokes FIRST before anything else — this is 60-70% of the active time.

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- Fill a large bowl with cold water + juice of 1 lemon. Use to hold trimmed artichokes so they don't oxidize.

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- For each artichoke: (1) cut 2 cm off the top with a serrated knife (removes the pointy leaves), (2) snap off the outer dark-green tough leaves (peel them off until you reach pale green), (3) trim the stem to 5 cm, peeling the fibrous outer layer with a paring knife to reveal the tender core, (4) trim the leaf tips with kitchen shears to remove the thorny points (purely cosmetic), (5) immediately plunge into acidulated water.

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- Make the compound butter: in a bowl, mash softened butter with white miso, mashed black garlic, usukuchi shoyu, yuzu zest, and black pepper. Mix until uniform. Transfer to a ramekin. Refrigerate if not using within 30 min (but it should be pliable, not hard).


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- Start par-boil water heating — 6 L water + 2 tbsp salt + bay leaves + peppercorns + 1 lemon squeezed and dropped in.

#### MAKE-AHEAD

## Timeline

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 - 50 min  
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- 3 5 min  
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- 3 0 min  
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- 2 5 min  
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- 1 5 min  
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- 5 min  
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- 3 min  
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## METHOD

# The Cook

### 1 Phase 1 — Trim the Artichokes

1. Fill a large bowl with cold water and the juice of one lemon. This is the holding solution — prevents oxidation (browning) while you work through the batch.
2. For each artichoke: with a serrated knife, cut 2 cm off the top (the pointed leaf cluster). This removes the sharpest tips.
3. Snap off the outer 2-3 layers of dark-green tough leaves. Grasp each leaf at the base and pull down-and-back. They should snap off cleanly. Continue until you reach leaves that are pale green and more tender.
4. Trim the stem to 5 cm length. With a paring knife, peel the fibrous outer layer off the stem, revealing the tender pale core underneath. The stem is actually the most tender part of the artichoke.
5. Use kitchen shears to cut the remaining thorny leaf tips off the sides. Purely cosmetic — the par-boil softens them anyway.
6. IMMEDIATELY drop the trimmed artichoke into the acidulated water. Move through the batch systematically — oxidation starts fast.

### 2 Phase 2 — Par-Boil to Heart-Tender

1. In a large stockpot, bring 6 L water + 2 tbsp salt + 3 bay leaves + 1 tbsp black peppercorns + the remaining lemon (squeezed + dropped in halves) to a gentle simmer.
2. Drop the trimmed artichokes in, stems DOWN. They will want to float — weigh down with a plate or small pot lid.
3. **Gentle simmer** 8-10 minutes. You're looking for **heart-tender**, not soft. Test by inserting a fork into the heart (bottom of the artichoke) — it should go in with moderate resistance. If it slides in like butter, you've overcooked.
4. Drain and cool on a wire rack for 2-3 minutes. The residual heat will finish the cooking slightly.

### 3 Phase 3 — Split + Choke-Remove + Grill

1. With a sharp chef's knife, cut each artichoke in half from top to stem, through the center.
2. With a spoon, scoop out the **fuzzy choke** (the hair-like center, inedible) from each half. The choke sits above the heart; remove completely. Discard.
3. You now have 16 artichoke halves, each with a hollow cup where the choke was, flanked by a cut face and a leaf-side back.
4. Brush the cut faces with EVOO. Season with salt.
5. Place each half **cut-face DOWN** on the hot kamado grate. The cut face makes direct contact with the hot grate and chars.
6. **3-4 minutes** undisturbed. Resist the urge to move or flip.
7. Flip to leaf-side down. **2 more minutes** — the leaf side gets gentler char, more steam cook.
8. Pull off the grill using a fish spatula. Transfer to a warmed platter, **cut-face UP** now, so the hollow cups are ready to receive butter.

### 4 Phase 4 — Compound Butter + Service

1. The compound butter should be at a soft-pliable room temperature (not melted, not hard). If it melted while waiting: stir briefly to re-incorporate; it's fine.
2. Dollop about 1 tsp of compound butter into each hollow cup (the cavity where the choke was). The residual heat from the grilled artichoke will partially melt the butter, and the miso-garlic-yuzu flavor coats the interior leaves as it flows.
3. Finish with flaky salt (several pinches), chopped chives or shiso, and optional fresh-cracked black pepper.
4. Serve immediately — artichokes cool fast, and the butter service works best when the artichokes are still warm.
5. Guests eat by pulling off leaves one at a time, scraping the tender base of each leaf with their teeth. Work from outer leaves inward. The stem and heart are eaten whole (tender, delicious).
6. Provide a small bowl at the table for discarded leaves — they pile up fast.

# Timing Cheat Sheet

STEP	TIME	CUE
undefined	- 5 0 min	undefined
undefined	- 3 5 min	undefined
undefined	- 3 0 min	undefined
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undefined	- 1 5 min	undefined
undefined	- 5 min	undefined
undefined	- 3 min	undefined
undefined	0 : 0 0	undefined
undefined	+ 0 : 0 4	undefined
undefined	+ 0 : 0 6	undefined
undefined	+ 0 : 0 7	undefined

TROUBLESHOOTING

## Emergency Protocols

 UNDEFINED

Cosmetic only; taste unaffected. The char from grilling will mask brown edges. Next time: work faster, keep lemon water bigger (submerge as you trim).

 UNDEFINED

Return to simmer for 3-5 more minutes. Re-test. Splitting and grilling doesn't tenderize further — heart must be done in the par-boil.

 UNDEFINED

Skip the flip — grill cut-face down only, 4-5 min max. Delicate handling. If fully mushy, salvage by scooping the tender flesh and serving as a spread over bread.

 UNDEFINED

Microwave 10 sec, stir, check. Repeat if needed. Target: soft-pliable but not melted. Overshoot: refrigerate 5 min.

 UNDEFINED

Add 15-20 g more butter to dilute. Or a 1/2 tsp of honey to balance saltiness.

 UNDEFINED

Substitute 4 roasted garlic cloves + 1 tsp balsamic vinegar + 1/2 tsp soy sauce. Approximates the sweet-umami-dark character. Not identical but close.

 UNDEFINED

Too hot. Move to a cooler part of the kamado or temporarily raise grate with firebricks. The char should be dark-brown, not black-ash.

 UNDEFINED

Pan-grill cut-face-down in a screaming-hot cast iron 3-4 min for a decent char. Not the same as kamado but acceptable. Finish with butter as planned.

## DEEP DIVES

# Technique Notes

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## PAIRING

# What to Drink

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### **Sake — Fusion Pairing**

Premium Junmai Ginjo — Hakkaisan, Nanbu Bijin, Kikusui Organic

*Sake's umami character and subtle rice sweetness mirror the miso butter. The char gets balanced by sake's clean finish. Serve cold (8-10 °C) in a small glass or ochoko. This is the pairing that makes the dish feel integrated rather than fusion-gimmick.*

### **Wine — Spanish**

Txakoli de Getaria — Txomin Etxaniz or Ameztoi

*Dry, saline, slightly spritzy — cuts through the butter richness and the miso's umami weight. The Basque register works with the Spanish structural spine of the dish.*

### **Wine — Sherry**

Amontillado seco — Lustau Almacenista or Valdespino Coliseo

*Nutty-oxidative character of Amontillado pairs brilliantly with grilled artichokes. Dry Amontillado is specifically a pairing for 'difficult' vegetables (artichokes, asparagus) — the oxidative complexity matches rather than fights.*

## CONTEXT

# Menu Ideas

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### **This as Tapa (spring)**

Opening course at a Spanish-Japanese fusion dinner. Served on a wooden board, 6-8 halves, guests pick at leisure with sake or Txakoli.

### Side to Kamado Main

Alongside iberico-secreto-kamado (UMAMI-6) or chuleton-reverse-sear (UMAMI-6) — all kamado, all live fire. The artichokes' char register mirrors the protein's register; the miso-butter adds the Japanese lane without disrupting the Spanish foundation.

### Spanish-Japanese Fusion Menu Flow

Part of a fusion evening: kanpachi crudo (UMAMI-2) → alcachofas a la brasa con miso-ajo → miso-salmon-sv (UMAMI-3) → ending with shio-koji-aged cheese or Japanese-inspired dessert. All bridging dishes.

### Vegetable Main (Meatless Option)

Double portion (2-3 halves per guest) + cachelos (boiled potatoes) + the miso butter spread generously. Vegetarian main for guests who skip meat — still centerpiece-feeling.

### Downstream — Cheese/Palate

A plate of aged Idiazabal (Basque sheep's milk) or Manchego — the salty aged cheese plays with the sweet-miso residue on the palate.

#### YOUR NOTES

## Cook Log

### Session Notes

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ · Serves: \_\_\_\_ · Rating: \_\_ / 5

*Use this space to record what you changed, what worked, and what you'd do differently next time. Your future self will thank you.*