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Raw Artichoke Salad

I rarely see artichokes served raw in the Northeast, but they're quite common in many parts of Italy, especially when classically marinated. This recipe can also be used with lightly steamed and sliced cardoons, which are in the same family as artichokes and just as delicious.

Makes 3 or 4 servings

2 medium artichokes
2 cups grapeseed oil
Kosher salt
2 excess trout, cod, or mackerel skins (2 ounces) left over from other recipes (salmon skin would also work; so can bonito flakes as an easy store-bought replacement)
1 fennel bulb
2 tablespoons Concord grape vinegar or high-quality balsamic vinegar
3 tablespoons Smoked Herb Oil (page 98 – *not included*), made with rosemary
5 garlic cloves, roasted (see Note, page 190 – *not included*)
1 cup Chestnut Yogurt (page 131 – *not included*)
2 ounces Smoked Trout Roe (page 144 – *not included*)
Freshly ground black pepper

1. Peel away the tough outer layers of the artichokes. Using scissors, trim off the pointy tips from the soft inner leaves and separate them. Remove the fuzzy chokes underneath and reserve the artichoke hearts.
2. Pour the oil into a medium saucepan and bring it to 350°F over medium-high heat. Add the soft inner artichoke leaves and fry until they're nice and golden brown, about 1 minute. Drain on paper towels and season with salt.
3. Carefully add a trout skin to the hot oil, keeping it as flat as possible. The skin will start puffing up and turning golden brown. Cook until browned and crisp, about 2 minutes per side. Drain on paper towels and season with salt. Repeat with the second trout skin.
4. Trim the bottom of the fennel bulb and remove and discard the stalks (or keep for making stock). Reserve and pick the fronds. Slice the fennel bulb thinly on a mandoline and toss it in a bowl with the vinegar and rosemary oil. Slice the raw artichoke hearts to ⅛ inch thick on the mandoline and add them to the bowl. Toss gently and let sit for at least 5 minutes (or up to 24 hours in the refrigerator).
5. In a bowl, mash the roasted garlic into a paste. Whisk in the yogurt until thoroughly combined.
6. Drain the vegetables in a colander, shaking lightly.
7. To serve, spoon the yogurt mixture onto a plate or layer at the bottom of a shallow jar or bowl and top with the artichoke-fennel salad, fennel fronds, and fried artichoke leaves. Break up the trout skins and place on top. Spoon a liberal amount of trout roe on each serving. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

