



Nana's Creole Italian Table

Recipes and Stories from Sicilian New Orleans

ELIZABETH M. WILLIAMS

Praise for *Nana's Creole Italian Table*:

"Visitors to New Orleans are often surprised by the ways in which this putatively French and African city turns out to be deeply Italian. Liz Williams's book helps us understand how Sicilian food turned into New Orleans cuisine, while giving us insights into family, neighborhood, and the city's wider culture. All that, and recipes too!"—David Beriss, coeditor of *The Restaurants Book: Ethnographies of Where We Eat*

"A cookbook, a history book, a saga of a Sicilian family of immigrants. In a kaleidoscope of flavors and fragrances, Liz Williams reveals Nana Elisabetta's secrets in marrying authentic recipes from southern Italy with locally discovered ingredients, spices, and culinary traditions."—Alessia Paolicchi, executive director, Italy-America Chamber of Commerce of Texas

"New Orleans's Italian community made enormous but often overlooked contributions to the city's cuisine. Liz Williams is your perfect guide on the journey to discover what Creole Italian means in New Orleans."—Brent Rosen, president and CEO, Southern Food and Beverage Museum



From meatball po'boys to Creole red gravy, the influence of Sicilian foodways permeates New Orleans, one of America's greatest food cities. *Nana's Creole Italian Table* tells the story of those immigrants and their communities through the lens of food, exploring the ways traditional Sicilian dishes such as pasta and olive salad became a part of—and were in turn changed by—the existing food culture in New Orleans.

Sicilian immigrants—Elizabeth M. Williams's family among them—came to New Orleans in droves in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, fleeing the instability of their own country and hoping to make a new home in America.

This cookbook shares Williams's traditional family recipes, with variations that reveal the evolution and blending of Sicilian and Creole cuisines. Baked into every recipe is the history of Sicilian American culture as it has changed over the centuries, allowing each new generation to incorporate its own foodways and ever-evolving tastes.

ELIZABETH M. WILLIAMS grew up eating in two great food traditions, those of New Orleans and Sicily. Founder of the Southern Food and Beverage Museum in New Orleans, now part of the larger National Food and Beverage Foundation, she has a weekly podcast, *Tip of the Tongue*, about food, drink, and culture. She is the author of many books and articles about foodways in New Orleans and the South.

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338 JOHNSTON HALL | BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70803

225-578-6294 | FAX 225-578-6461 | Orders/Customer Service 800-848-6224 | www.lsupress.org



Top: Nana as a young woman. *Bottom:* Nana and her daughter Josephine in Tremé. From the author's personal collection.

STUFFED ARTICHOKEs

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

In New Orleans, stuffed artichokes are found in most Creole Italian restaurants and are available as ready-to-eat takeout in many grocery stores. They also have a prominent place on St. Joseph altars. As you can tell by this recipe, the dish calls for simple ingredients, but putting them together takes a lot of work. Like so much Sicilian food, the flavor lies in the care and detail and not in expensive ingredients.

¾ cup olive oil, divided	2 lemon halves
1 anchovy	2 bay leaves
1 medium onion, finely chopped	A few cups water
6 cloves garlic, minced	4 large artichokes
½ cup dry white wine	1 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons lemon juice	<i>For serving:</i> 4 lemon slices, lemon zest, and chopped fresh parsley
6 cups Seasoned Breadcrumbs	

1. Heat ½ cup olive oil in a heavy Dutch oven. (Do not use cast iron unless it is enameled.) Add the anchovy and stir it and break it up until it dissolves in the oil. Add the onion and sauté until the onions are soft, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and sauté 30 seconds. Stir in the wine and the lemon juice. Place the breadcrumbs in a large bowl. Add the olive oil mixture and stir until it is well distributed.
2. To the Dutch oven, add 1 inch of water with remaining ¼ cup olive oil, a lemon half, and the bay leaves. Set aside.
3. Use a long, serrated knife to cut the pointy end off each artichoke. Cut the stems even with the base of the artichokes so they will sit well and upright in the pot and on the plate. Use a pair of scissors or a knife to remove any remaining thorns and remove any damaged leaves. Open the leaves like a flower and remove the choke. Rub the cut parts of the artichoke with the remaining lemon half and sprinkle the chokes with the salt.
4. Starting from the outside, fill the cavity of each leaf with the moistened breadcrumbs. As you reach the artichoke's center the leaves will be too small or too tight to stuff. At this point stuff the cavity in the center where the choke had been. Repeat this process with each artichoke, using all of the breadcrumbs. It should take a quarter of the mixture for each artichoke.
5. Preheat oven to 325°F. Place the artichokes into the Dutch oven. Cover and bring to a simmer. Place the hot pot into oven and bake until the leaves can easily be pulled off the artichokes, between 1¼ to 1½ hours. Place each artichoke on a plate. Garnish each with a slice of lemon on the top, and sprinkle with chopped parsley and lemon zest.