

Scafata with Soft-Cooked Farm Eggs & Mint

Scafata is a farm-style stew of favas and other spring vegetables from the central Italian region of Umbria. It's a hearty dish that's slowly simmered until the vegetables are quite soft. We make it with favas, peas, and baby artichokes, and we like to treat those tender spring vegetables in a more Californian way, cooking each of them separately and only briefly. Served with a soft-cooked egg, it's wonderfully warming and comforting without being heavy. You can also top *scafata* with *burrata* and a slice or two of prosciutto. Or try tossing it with pasta (orecchiette work well), adding a little of the pasta cooking water as needed. We serve *scafata* as a main dish, but it makes an excellent side with fish, chicken, or grilled meat. For a vegetarian version, omit the pancetta and add a little more salt.

SERVES 4

1 lemon, halved

1/2 lb baby artichokes

Kosher salt

1 lb English peas in the pod, shucked

1 1/2 lb fava beans in the pod, shucked

1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil

1/4 cup finely diced pancetta

1/2 cup thinly sliced spring onion

4 cloves garlic, sliced

1/2 cup medium- to full-bodied white wine (such as Chardonnay)

4 inner butter lettuce leaves, cut into wide chiffonade

1 tablespoon distilled white vinegar

5 cold large eggs

Sel gris, for finishing

Freshly ground black pepper, for finishing

4 large fresh mint leaves, torn

To prepare the artichokes: Squeeze the juice of the lemon halves into a medium bowl of cold water. Working with 1 artichoke at a time, cut off the top one-third of the artichoke, then pull off the tough outer leaves. Trim the base of the stem, then peel away the tough green outer layer from the stem. Cut the artichoke lengthwise into quarters, trim away any bit of fuzzy choke from each quarter, and drop the quarters into the lemon water. Repeat with the remaining artichokes.

To prepare the peas and fava beans: Bring a pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Fill a bowl with water and ice. Add the peas to the boiling water and blanch for 1 minute. Using a wire skimmer, scoop out the peas and plunge them into the ice bath to halt the cooking. When cold, remove the peas from the ice water and spread on a paper towel to dry.

Add more ice to the ice bath. Add the fava beans to the boiling water and cook for about 1 minute, until tender. The timing will depend on their size. Drain and plunge the beans into the ice bath to halt the cooking. When cold, drain the beans. To slip each fava from its skin, gently apply pressure and pinch the fatter end of the bean, being careful not to squish the bean. Place the favas in a small bowl.

To make the scafata: In a shallow 4-qt pot, warm the oil and pancetta together over medium heat. Cook and stir for 3 minutes, until fragrant. Drain the artichokes, add to the pot, and stir to coat. Season with 1 teaspoon salt and cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes. Add the onion and garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes. Add the wine and 1 teaspoon salt and cook, stirring, for 1 to 2 minutes. Most of the wine will have reduced at this point. Add the peas and cook for 1 minute longer. Remove from the heat and stir in the lettuce and fava beans.

Meanwhile, make the soft-cooked eggs: In a medium pot, combine 8 cups water, 1 tablespoon kosher salt, and the vinegar and bring to a boil over high heat. Using a slotted spoon, carefully lower the eggs into the boiling water and cook for 5 minutes. Again, using the spoon, transfer the eggs to a hard work surface, then, protecting your hand from the heat, roll them gently to crack the shell slightly. One at a time, carefully peel the eggs under cool running water.

To serve: Divide the scafata among four individual serving bowls. Cut the soft-cooked eggs in half lengthwise, then top each bowl with an egg. Sprinkle the cut sides of the eggs with sel gris and pepper. Garnish each bowl with the mint. Serve immediately.