Eggplant, like the Imperial Black Beauty variety shown here, is part of the Solanaceae family, more commonly known as nightshades. They are kin to the tomato, bell pepper and potato.

**artichokes**

Taste: A chemical compound found in artichokes called cynarin inhibits the sweet receptors on our tongues, so desserts will taste especially sweet when followed by a course including these members of the lettuce family.

Harvest: Each flowering stem produces one large artichoke at the tip and several smaller ones below. Harvest the central bud first when its scales are tightly closed and the globe is about the size of an orange.

Health: This flower bud contains a flavonoid called silymarin, which works as an antioxidant to help protect artery walls from damaging LDL-cholesterol.

Etymology: The common name comes from the Italian word cocei (coqui) which means pinecone.

**eggplant**

*In history:* During the 16th century Spaniards knew eggplants as the “apple of love.”

*About the veggie:* Eggplant, or aubergine as it is called in France, is a vegetable long prized for its beauty as well as its unique taste and texture. Eggplants grow in a manner much like tomatoes, hanging from the vines of a plant that grows several feet in height.

*In the kitchen:* When cutting an eggplant, use a stainless steel knife as carbon steel will react with its phytonutrients and cause it to turn black. Wash the eggplant first and then cut off the ends.

Health: Known for its beautiful skin, eggplant is rich in various pigments with potential health benefits. Nasunin is a pigment that studies show may protect brain cell membranes from oxidative damage. All that and it’s only 27 calories per cup when cooked!