

SPRING 2005

Savor

WineCountry

THOMAS KELLER

A master chef talks about perfection

SCULPTURE AND WINE

Good form in the vines

COUNTER CULTURE

Great restaurant, long wait. An insider's solution



BRIGHT PURPLE THISTLES



Brown has a workable recipe for the cardoons planted in her garden. "But mostly I have them growing because I love the look of them."

Carrie Brown

Proprietor,
Jimtown Store

"When the cardoons come back into bloom ..."

It might sound like a Katharine Hepburn line, but for Carrie Brown, this is a real-life refrain that beautifully plays out every year in her garden, tucked behind her rural Alexander Valley store.

Years ago she found herself admiring the wild artichokes, or cardoons, that her elderly neighbor had planted as a reminder of her native Sicily. Brown gathered seeds from the massive plants with their bright purple thistles that pop out each April.

"They grow 6 to 8 feet. The bees love them, they're so sweet and gorgeous," says Brown.

The ever-creative Brown has experimented in the kitchen with her cardoons. "You have to strip the fibers. The stalk is almost like a huge, overblown celery. The leaves

are just like an artichoke. I've tried to blanch the stalks and braise them. It's OK, if I grate copious amounts of Parmesan-Reggiano or a little gratin with cream. But mostly I have them growing because I love the look of them."



A delicate taste

The gentle warmth of spring coaxes buds, inspires chefs, invigorates vintners