**Beef Stew with Jerusalem Artichokes**

3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil

1 ½ lbs. stew beef or blade steak, in 1 ½ inch cubes

Coarse salt & freshly ground pepper

1 ½ lbs Jerusalem artichokes (2 pints), peeled, cut into ¾ inch cubes and reserved in cold water (drain and pat dry before using)

2 cups coarsely chopped onion

2 garlic cloves, minced

1 tbsp freshly grated ginger

1 whole cinnamon stick

2 whole cloves

2 green cardamom pods, lightly crushed

½ tsp crushed red pepper flakes

1 can (35 oz) whole plum tomatoes with juice

1 cup beef stock

1/8 tsp crumbled saffron threads

1 jar capers, drained

¼ cup finely chopped fresh cilantro

Heat 2 tbps oil in large heavy pot over medium high heat. Season beef with salt and pepper; brown the meat on all sides, about 8 minutes. Transfer to a bowl. Cook the artichokes in remaining oil in same pot, stirring occasionally until well browned, about 7 minutes. Transfer artichokes to separate bowl. Add onions, parlic and ginger to pot; sauté, stirring occasionally, until onion is translucent, about 4 minutes. Add cinnamon, cloves, cardamom and pepper flakes; cook, stirring constantly for 2 minutes.

Stir in tomatoes and juice, stock, saffron and 1 tsp salt. Break up tomatoes. Transfer to crock pot with the reserved beef and set at high. Cover and simmer for 1 hour, until meat is tender. Add reserved artichokes and continue to simmer until artichokes are tender, approx. 20 minutes. Add caperberries during final 5 minutes of cooking. Season with salt and pepper; stir in cilantro. Discard cinnamon, cloves and cardamom before serving.