

CAULIFLOWER

Cauliflower, a member of the cabbage family, which also includes kale, broccoli, collard greens, and Brussels sprouts, is made up of bunches of tiny creamy white florets on white stalks. Unlike most of its cousins, where you eat the leaves, with cauliflower, or kale-flower, you eat the flowers. While most cauliflower is white, some have a green or purplish tinge, and Safeway is now selling a new variety of orange cauliflower developed in Canada, that is a wonderful source of vitamin A. Cauliflower is also fat and cholesterol free, high in vitamin C, low in sodium and calories, and generally just good for you. And it even tastes good.

You can eat cauliflower raw with a dip or in salads, or cooked in many different ways. It can be added to soups. The florets can be dipped in batter and deep fried. They can be stir-fried. They can be steamed, boiled or microwaved, and served with any number of sauces. One of my favorites is cauliflower with a breadcrumb sauce.

Take a head of cauliflower and remove the leaves. Separate the cauliflower into large florets of about the same size, anywhere from a dozen to about 16, depending on the size of the head. I microwaved the florets in a covered glass bowl with about a tablespoon of water for about six minutes, but you can boil them in a cup of water for about 8 minutes. They should be crisp-tender.

Meanwhile, toast a slice or two of bread. I used a left-over pull-apart dinner roll. When toasted, break it into the bowl of a food processor and process until crumbled. You should have about 4 tablespoons. Then chop about 4 green onions—you want about half a cup.

In a large frying pan, melt three tablespoons of butter. I also added a small amount of roasted-garlic flavored olive oil. You can do this with just plain olive oil if you prefer. When the butter or oil is hot, add the green onions and the bread crumbs, and sauté them over medium heat for a couple of minutes. Add about ¼ teaspoon of freshly ground black pepper and about a ¼ teaspoon of salt. Drain the cauliflower florets and put them into the frying pan with the breadcrumbs and green onions. Stir for a minute or so, and serve.

You can also make a cheese sauce for cauliflower. While the cauliflower is cooking, make a white sauce by melting a couple of tablespoons of butter in a frying pan over medium-low heat. Add two tablespoons of flour and stir for a couple of minutes to cook the flour. Then, stirring constantly, slowly pour in a cup of milk. When the sauce thickens, add a pinch of salt and a couple of drops of Tabasco. Then stir in about half a cup or even more of grated cheese, such as cheddar. Pour the sauce over the drained cauliflower and serve.

The Indians use cauliflower in several of their curries. Take a head of cauliflower and separate it into florets—you want about four cups. Peel and finely chop 3 cloves of garlic and shred a 1-inch long piece of fresh ginger. Seed and chop 2 or 3 jalapeno chiles, depending on how hot you like things. Heat a wok or large skillet with a cover over high heat and when hot, add 3 tablespoons of vegetable oil. When the oil is hot, add ½ teaspoon each of whole cumin seeds and whole yellow mustard seeds. As soon as the mustard seeds begin to pop (this takes just a few seconds), add the garlic, ginger, green chiles, and the cauliflower florets. Stir-fry for about 7 or 8 minutes, until the cauliflower has started to brown in places. Then add about ½ teaspoon of salt, or to taste, some freshly ground black pepper, about ½ teaspoon of *garam masala*, which is an Indian spice blend now available at our local supermarkets, and about 1/8 teaspoon of cayenne pepper, or to taste. Stir well and add ¼ cup of water and cover the wok. Cook for a couple of minutes, uncover and serve immediately. This is delicious not only with an Indian meal, but as an accompaniment to roast meat of any kind.