



cruciferous crop

Cauliflower: the French call it chou-fleur or “cabbage flower” which, as it happens, isn’t too far from the truth. Like its dark green cousin, broccoli, this heavy, textured vegetable is actually comprised of undeveloped flowers. That’s a nutritional bonanza for us; instead of using all those nutrients to produce blooms, they remain behind in the

“stems” providing generous amounts of vitamin C, omega-3 fatty acids, B vitamins and fiber.

Interestingly, cauliflower is particularly favorable among mathematicians due to its nearly perfect – and tasty – illustration of fractals. Cauliflower’s florets are comprised of repetitive florets that duplicate themselves in appearance no matter how large or small they might be. Break off a single curd, and it will look exactly like the larger curd from which you took it. This pattern might repeat itself into infinity if it weren’t for cauliflower’s mortality and our fondness for cream of cauliflower soup.

While cauliflower’s origins are shrouded in mystery, what we do know is this: cauliflower came to Europe through the Middle East. While it was extremely popular with the Arabs, it wasn’t until after the mid-1600s that it became a fashionable addition to the French royal table. It made its way north into Great Britain and the rest of Europe, and finally to the United States. Considered a luxury not too long ago, today it’s available year-round. Most American cauliflower is grown in California’s Salinas Valley or on New York’s Long Island. For

some 50 years, cauliflower was the economic mainstay of the little town of Margaretville, New York. Locals still celebrate the vegetable with an annual cauliflower festival.

Cauliflower is not easily grown and requires a great deal of attention. Harvesting must be done by hand. The creamy white surfaces will turn green unless they’re protected from the sun – a feat that used to be accomplished by tying the leaves over the head. Modern varieties have been developed in which the leaves grow tightly over the heads themselves, enveloping and protecting the crucifer plant inside. The leaves are edible too, and worth chopping up as an addition to vegetable stock or soup.

When selecting cauliflower, look for a clean, white surface. A head of cauliflower should feel heavy when you hold it. Store it for up to five days in a tightly wrapped paper bag in your vegetable crisper. It’s eminently versatile; try roasting, steaming or stir-frying. Make a warm, rib-sticking gratin for cool days, or simply eat it raw, dipped in your favorite dressing.

For those watching their carbs, try these simple recipes:

Skinny Mashers

Prep: 10 minutes

Cook: 25 minutes • Serves: 4

- 1 medium head cauliflower (about 3 pounds), cut into 1½-inch florets
- 1¾ cups Progresso® reduced sodium chicken broth

- 2 tablespoons refrigerated shredded or grated Parmesan cheese plus additional for serving

1. In 3- to 4-quart saucepan, add cauliflower and broth. Cover and heat to boiling over medium-high heat; boil 20 minutes or until cauliflower is fork-tender. Drain cauliflower well.

2. Place immersion blender in saucepan and blend until almost smooth, or use potato masher to mash cauliflower. Stir in cheese; pass additional cheese to sprinkle on top. Makes about 4½ cups.

Each serving: about 120 calories, 3 g total fat (1.5 g saturated), 5 mg cholesterol, 260 mg sodium, 17 g carbohydrate, 7 g fiber, 10 g protein

Dijon Roasted Cauliflower

Prep: 10 minutes

Roast: 30 minutes • Serves: 6

- 1 tablespoon Schnucks Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon Schnucks olive oil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper

- 5 garlic cloves, each cut lengthwise in half
- 2 medium onions, each cut into 8 wedges
- 1 medium head cauliflower (about 3 pounds), cut into 1½-inch florets

Preheat oven to 450°F. For easier cleanup, line large rimmed baking pan with aluminum foil. In large bowl, stir together mustard, oil, salt and pepper. Add garlic, onions and cauliflower and

toss until well coated. Spread cauliflower mixture in single layer in prepared pan. Roast 30 to 35 minutes or until cauliflower browns, stirring once halfway through cooking.

Each serving: about 50 calories, 3 g total fat (1 g saturated), 0 mg cholesterol, 223 mg sodium, 6 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 2 g protein