



Cauliflower Mac 'n Cheese

By Erin Fletter

Prep Time 40 / **Cook Time** 20 / **Serves** 4 - 6

Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

grate: to reduce food, like a carrot, to very small shreds or pieces of the same size by rubbing it on a tool with an outside surface that has holes with cutting edges (a grater).

mince: to chop into teeny tiny pieces.

simmer: to cook a food gently, usually in a liquid, until softened.

Equipment

- Large pot
- Colander
- Cutting board + kid-safe knife
- Grater
- Dry measuring cups
- Liquid measuring cup
- Large saucepan
- Wooden spoon
- Measuring spoons

Ingredients

Cauliflower Mac 'n Cheese

- 8 oz dried macaroni (about 4 C cooked) **** (for GLUTEN ALLERGY sub gluten-free/nut-free elbow pasta)****
- 1 1/2 C cauliflower (about 1/4 small head)

- 2 C cheddar cheese, grated **** (for DAIRY ALLERGY sub dairy-free/nut-free pre-shredded cheese, like Daiya brand)****
- 1 C heavy cream **** (for DAIRY ALLERGY sub canned white beans, if no legume allergy present, puréed with can liquid + olive oil—more info below)****
- 1 pinch nutmeg
- 1/4 tsp salt + more to taste
- 1 pinch ground black pepper + more to taste

Food Allergen Substitutions

Cauliflower Mac 'n Cheese

Gluten/Wheat: Substitute gluten-free elbow pasta for macaroni.

Dairy: Substitute dairy-free/nut-free pre-shredded cheese, like Daiya brand. For 1 C heavy cream, substitute 1 C of canned white beans (if no legume allergies) puréed with can liquid + 2 T olive oil.

Instructions

Cauliflower Mac 'n Cheese

cook + drain

Cook **8 ounces of dried macaroni** to al dente, about 1 minute less than the package directions, and then drain and set to the side.

mince + grate

Mince **1 1/2 cups of cauliflower** into teeny-tiny pieces. Then, grate **2 cups of cheddar cheese**.

simmer + melt + cook

Add **1 cup of heavy cream** to a large saucepan on your stovetop and simmer over medium-high heat until it is thick and bubbly and has reduced by half. Next, stir in the grated cheese and minced cauliflower and cook until the cheese has melted and the cauliflower is tender.

measure + taste + adjust

Measure and add **1 pinch of nutmeg**, **1/4 teaspoon salt**, and **1 pinch of black pepper**. Taste the cheese sauce and adjust any seasonings if more is needed.

add + stir

Turn off the heat under your saucepan and add the cooked macaroni. Stir it all up with one hand—it's that

easy!

Featured Ingredient: Cauliflower!

Hi! I'm Cauliflower!

"I'm a vegetable with a head full of flowers—actually, flower buds. I'm a cauliflower, and my florets (also called curds) are a tight bunch! They are often white, but you might see cauliflowers with green, orange, and purple heads. We also have a variety called Romanesco broccoli (they like to be different), which is green with spiral, spiky-looking florets! Cauliflower is a great gluten-free substitute for a pizza crust, and you can make a yummy, low-carbohydrate version of mashed potatoes with me, too!"

History

Cauliflower is a cousin of kale, cabbage, brussels sprouts, kohlrabi, collard greens, and broccoli. These vegetables (including cauliflower) are descendants of the same wild vegetable called "Brassica oleracea." Brassica oleracea is native to the southern and western coasts of Europe (find these areas on your map!). Over several generations, farmers have selected different features of the Brassica oleracea. From these selections, each of the original species' modern-day relatives was born: cabbage, kale, brussels sprouts, kohlrabi, broccoli, collard greens, and cauliflower.

These modern-day vegetables are called cultivars. They are different varieties of the same original plant bred to have desirable qualities for human purposes—in this case, to eat!

Cauliflower is quite a noble vegetable. History tells us that the French King Louis the 14th demanded that cauliflower be present at every feast.

China is the largest harvester of cauliflower in the world. China produces an estimated ten million tons of cauliflower and broccoli per year.

Anatomy & Etymology

The head of the cauliflower (what we eat!) is actually undeveloped flowers! It's true! Each flower is bonded to its neighboring flower so that together, they form a tightly-packed head of "curds."

Cauliflowers can be purple, green, orange, yellow, or white!

Cauliflower develops coarse, green leaves that grow in a rosette shape. The leaves are attached to the stalk, which is centered and sturdy enough to hold the cauliflower's large, heavy white head.

These giant leaves grow up and over the cauliflower head to protect it. Cauliflower will stay white if farmers "blanch" it or cover the heads to shield them from the sun. When cauliflowers are the size of tennis balls, farmers cover them with their biggest outer leaves and tie them at the top. Farmers give the cauliflower leaves a haircut at harvest time and trim the huge leaves closer to the cauliflower head.

If cauliflower heads are not covered as they grow, they will turn dull yellow. Yellow cauliflowers actually have MORE vitamins than white cauliflower because the sun has allowed the heads to develop

phytonutrients or special plant vitamins. Heirloom varieties of cauliflower are naturally bright purple, green, or orange and are also high in phytonutrients.

Cauliflower is a bit of a picky vegetable. It doesn't like to grow in too hot or too cold temperatures. It also prefers a very comfortable environment free from pests like insects (as we imagine, would most veggies and fruits!). Cauliflower is especially prone to insect infestations.

The word "cauliflower" may be from the French "chou-fleur" or from the Italian "cavolfiore," which both mean "cabbage flower."

How to Pick, Buy, and Eat

Cauliflowers are picked when they have reached the expected size and texture.

When buying cauliflower, look for compact heads where the curds (individual florets) are not separated but tightly packed together. Avoid heads that have blemishes or spots on them.

Store raw cauliflower in a paper or plastic bag in the fridge for up to a week.

Cauliflowers can be eaten raw, cooked, or pickled. (They're delicious pickled!)

You can sauté cauliflower leaves in butter (just ask Nigella Lawson!).

You can also rice cauliflower florets or curds by pulsing them in a food processor for a great low-carb alternative to white rice.

Nutrition

One cup of raw cauliflower has more vitamin C than an orange!

Cauliflower has quercetin, a pigment that helps protect our veins and arteries, the tubes that transport our blood!

Cauliflower is high in fiber, which helps us digest our food.

Our bodies are basically giant collections of cells. Every organ, every inch of skin, every body part is made up of millions of invisible cells that each have their own job in keeping us healthy.

Antioxidants are nutrients that clean our body's house to keep our cells happy and healthy. Fruits and vegetables provide these antioxidants, and cauliflower is an excellent source, keeping our internal house clean and healthy