

Cauliflower with Bechamel Sauce

Rich and creamy cauliflower au gratin with bechamel sauce and cheese. Perfect comfort food side dish for holidays and family dinners.

20 min

PREP

20 min

COOK

40 min

TOTAL

4

SERVINGS

Easy

DIFFICULTY

Ingredients

- 1 cauliflower
- 2 oz kashari cheese

Instructions

- 1 Prepare the oven and cauliflower**

Preheat your oven to 175°C (350°F). Bring a large pot of salted water to a rolling boil over high heat.
- 2** Cut 1 head of cauliflower into bite-sized florets, discarding the leaves and thick stem. Rinse the florets under cold water.
- 3** Add the cauliflower florets to the boiling water and cook for 4-5 minutes until just tender when pierced with a fork but still firm.
- 4** Drain the cauliflower immediately and plunge into a bowl of ice water to stop the cooking process. Drain thoroughly and pat dry with paper towels.
- 5 Make the bechamel sauce**

Melt 2 oz of butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat until it stops foaming.
- 6** Whisk in 2 tablespoons of flour and cook for 2 minutes, stirring constantly, to create a paste (called a roux) that eliminates the raw flour taste.
- 7** Gradually pour in 1½ cups of warm milk while whisking constantly to prevent lumps from forming.
- 8** Continue cooking and whisking for 5-7 minutes until the sauce thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon. Season with salt, white pepper, and a pinch of nutmeg.

9 Assemble and bake

Arrange the blanched cauliflower florets in a greased 23x33cm (9x13 inch) baking dish in a single layer.

10 Pour the hot bechamel sauce evenly over the cauliflower, ensuring all florets are well coated.

11 Sprinkle 1 cup of grated cheese evenly over the top and bake for 20-25 minutes until the sauce is bubbling and the top is golden brown.

12 Remove from oven and let rest for 5 minutes before serving to allow the sauce to set slightly.

Tips

Choose fresh, firm cauliflower heads without brown spots or soft areas. The florets should be compact and white or cream-colored. Avoid cauliflower that feels lightweight for its size, as this indicates it may be past its prime.

Blanch cauliflower florets in well-salted boiling water for only 3-5 minutes until slightly tender but still firm. Immediately plunge into ice water to stop cooking and preserve texture. Drain thoroughly to prevent excess moisture in the final dish.

Make your bechamel sauce smooth by gradually whisking warm milk into the butter-flour roux. Add the milk slowly and whisk constantly to prevent lumps. If lumps do form, strain the sauce or use an immersion blender to smooth it out.

Use a combination of cheeses for complex flavor - try Gruyere for nuttiness, sharp cheddar for tang, and Parmesan for depth. Grate cheese fresh rather than using pre-shredded for better melting and flavor.

Layer the ingredients properly by arranging cauliflower in a single layer in your baking dish, then pouring the sauce evenly over top. This ensures even coating and cooking throughout the dish.

Create a golden, crispy top by sprinkling breadcrumbs mixed with a little melted butter and extra cheese over the sauce before baking. This adds textural contrast to the creamy interior.

Let the finished dish rest for 5-10 minutes after baking before serving. This allows the sauce to set slightly and makes it easier to serve neat portions without the sauce running everywhere.

Adjust sauce consistency as needed - if too thick, whisk in a little warm milk; if too thin, cook a bit longer to reduce, or mix a small amount of cornstarch with cold milk and stir in to thicken.