

Cauliflower Gratin

Fontina Mornay, Pumpernickel Breadcrumbs

By Paws Up Executive Chef Sunny Jin



Serves 10–12

For the Cauliflower:

2 heads cauliflower, cut into bite-size florets

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add cauliflower and cook, uncovered, 3 minutes or until tender. Remove immediately and shock in an ice bath for at least 3 minutes. Drain and set aside.

NOTE: Use the largest pot available to maintain a strong boil. This allows the cauliflower to cook more evenly and helps to avoid it becoming mushy on the outside while remaining crunchy in its center.

For the Fontina Mornay:

1/2 cup all-purpose flour

3/4 pound butter

2 quarts whole milk

2 sweet onions, peeled and halved

3 bay leaves

5 whole garlic cloves

Pinch nutmeg

1 cup grated Parmesan cheese

2 cups grated Fontina cheese

Salt to taste

1. In a large saucepan, make a light roux with the flour and butter. Whisk in the milk vigorously over high heat. Once the milk has been incorporated, turn down to medium heat. Add the onions, stirring constantly until the mixture starts to thicken. Add the bay leaves, garlic cloves and nutmeg and cook over low heat, stirring frequently to avoid scorching the bottom of the pot. Cook 20 minutes or until flour has been thoroughly cooked. Add Parmesan and Fontina, stirring continuously. Stir until fully incorporated. Season with salt, if desired.
2. Remove mixture from saucepan and pass through a chinois (fine mesh sieve). Immediately set over ice to cool completely. Use immediately, or cool over ice to avoid clumping.

NOTE: If the Mornay is too thick, add more milk to achieve the desired consistency.

For the Pumpernickel Breadcrumbs:

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1 pint pumpernickel (pulsed in a food processor to coarse breadcrumbs, about 5 slices of bread)

1 teaspoon finely minced garlic

1/2 cup finely grated Parmesan cheese

2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley

2 tablespoons minced shallots

Salt and pepper to taste

1. Heat butter and olive oil in a medium-sized pan over medium-low heat. Add pumpernickel and garlic and keep the pan moving to avoid burning; sauté gently until lightly toasted. Transfer mixture to a bowl and let cool to room temperature. Add Parmesan, parsley, shallots and adjust the seasonings with salt and pepper.

To Assemble:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. In a large pot, heat the Mornay over medium heat until hot, stirring constantly to avoid scorching the bottom of the pot. Add the cauliflower and continue cooking until the mixture is thoroughly combined.
3. Transfer the mixture into a large lightly greased ovenproof dish. Sprinkle the breadcrumbs over the top and bake in a preheated oven 15 to 20 minutes or until golden brown.