

Cauliflower

TOMATO BRAISED CAULIFLOWER

This is an excellent side dish, but it also makes a great sauce for pasta, or when topped with shaved Pecorino Romano Cheese, a delicious appetizer.

1 head cauliflower (@ 2.5 lbs) or 3 smaller romanesco heads of cauliflower
3 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
1 cup diced onions
4 cloves garlic, crushed
2 fresh or dried bay leaves
1 tsp. crushed red pepper
salt
2 cups cored, peeled and seeded, tomatoes or one 16 oz can Italian plum tomatoes, drained and seeded.

Pull off the cauliflower leaves and cut out the core. Break the cauliflower head into florets no larger than 1.5". In a large casserole, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onions and garlic and cook, stirring until wilted, about 4 minutes. Add the cauliflower, bay leaves, and peperoncino and season lightly with salt. Cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Meanwhile, crush the tomatoes by hand. Add the tomatoes to the cauliflower and cook, covered, until the cauliflower is very tender and most of the liquid has been absorbed, about another 30 minutes. Check the cauliflower after 20 minutes. There should be just enough liquid to lightly coat it. If there is more, finish cooking the cauliflower uncovered. Season with salt and serve hot.

Caramelized Cauliflower

- 1 head of cauliflower, white or purple
- Olive oil
- Fine sea salt

Preheat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Place the head of cauliflower on a cutting board, and slice it top-down into 1/4-inch slices, some of which will crumble. Toss cauliflower in a large bowl with plenty of olive oil and a bit of salt, spread it in a single layer on a heavy sheet pan (or two, if one looks crowded), and roast until golden brown and caramelized, turning bits and slices once or twice, about 25 minutes. Devour.

Cauliflower & Quinoa Dish

- 1 c quinoa
- 1 head cauliflower, cut into florets
- 1 c broccoli, cut into small pieces
- large handful snow peas, sliced
- 1 shallot, minced
- 3 T lemon juice

- 1/2 T curry powder
- cilantro
- olive oil
- marinated artichokes

Cook your quinoa and allow to cool slightly. Steam the cauliflower, broccoli, and snow peas to the texture you like. Make a vinaigrette with the shallot, lemon juice, curry powder, a bit of cilantro, and olive oil. Fold that into the quinoa with the vegetables and add salt and pepper to taste. Serve warm, topped with the artichokes. I also finished this with a blackened fish, but it is fine by itself.

Vegetable & Chickpea Curry

- 1 tablespoon olive or other cooking oil
- 1 cup chopped onion or leek
- 1 cup (1/4-inch-thick) slices carrot
- 1 tablespoon curry powder
- 1 teaspoon brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon grated peeled fresh ginger
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 Serrano chile, seeded and minced
- 3 cups cooked chickpeas (garbanzo beans)
- 1 cups cubed peeled potato
- 1 cup coarsely chopped sweet (bell or other) pepper
- 1 cup cauliflower or romanesco, cut or broken up into florets
- teaspoon salt
- teaspoon black pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon ground red pepper
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 can (14 ounces) vegetable broth
- 3 cups fresh baby spinach or other cooking greens
- 1 cup light coconut milk
- 6 lemon wedges

Heat oil in large non-stick skillet over medium heat. Add onion and carrot, cover and cook 5 minutes or until tender. Add curry powder, brown sugar, ginger, cloves and chile. Cook 1 minute, stirring constantly.

Place onion mixture in 5-quart electric slow cooker. Stir in chickpeas, potato, sweet peppers, the cauliflower/romanesco, salt, pepper, ground red pepper, tomatoes and broth. Cover and cook on high 6 hours or until vegetables are tender. Add spinach and coconut milk, stir until spinach wilts. Serve with lemon wedges. Makes 6 servings.

Simple Roasted Cauliflower

- head purple or white cauliflower, trimmed and cut into 2-3 inch pieces
- teaspoons olive oil
- coarse salt and cracked black pepper

Preheat oven to 400°. Place cauliflower in a large plastic bag. Drizzle the olive oil over the cauliflower, seal the bag, and shake until cauliflower is coated evenly with the oil. Add more oil, a teaspoon at a time, if two teaspoons doesn't seem like enough. Place cauliflower in a single layer on a cookie sheet; season with salt and pepper. Bake 12 minutes for barely crunchy or up to 25 minutes, depending upon your preference. I prefer it on the toasty, crunchy side.

Cavalfiore con l'Uvetta e i Pignoli

Cauliflower with Raisins and Pine Nuts, by Marcella Hazan

For 4 to 6 persons.

- 1 oz seedless raisins
- 1 young head cauliflower, about 1 ½ lbs
- 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tsp garlic, chopped fine
- 1 oz pine nuts
- salt
- black pepper in a grinder
- 2 Tbsp parsley

Soak the raisins in water for 15 to 20 minutes.

Trim the cauliflower of all its outer leaves except for the tender, almost totally white ones. [When I flipped over the purple head and plucked away the tough green leaves I was dazzled to find the young ones also had a lovely purple hue.] Drop the head into 4 quarts of boiling water. After the water returns to a boil, cook for 6 to 7 minutes until it is halfway done, that is, until you feel resistance when pricking it with a fork. Drain it and cut it into 1 ½-inch pieces.

When the raisins have finished soaking, drain them and squeeze them gently in your hands to force off excess liquid.

Choose a lidded saute pan that can subsequently accommodate all the cauliflower pieces without overlapping. Put in the oil and the garlic and turn on the heat to medium without covering the pan.

When the garlic becomes colored a pale gold, add the cauliflower, raisins, pine nuts, salt, generous grindings of pepper, cover the pan, and turn down the heat to low. Cook for 8 to 10 minutes or more, stirring from time to time, until the cauliflower feels tender when tested with a fork. Sprinkle on the chopped parsley and serve hot. [I didn't have parsley on hand, and frankly I didn't miss it.]

Bok Choy

Braised Bok Choy

- 2 pounds baby bok choy or mature bok choy
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 cup chopped red onion
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon white pepper
- 2 tablespoons seasoned rice vinegar (available in the Asian section of your grocery store, or from specialty Asian markets)

1. Trim the base of the bok choy, then chop off the leaves. Cut the base in half lengthwise, then cut the halves crosswise on a diagonal into 1/4-inch-thick strips. Cut the leaves crosswise on a diagonal into 1 1/2-inch-wide strips.

2. Place a large wok or a pot large enough to hold all the bok choy over medium heat. When it is hot, add the olive oil and rotate the wok or pot a bit to coat it evenly. When the oil is hot, add the onion and stir-fry until softened, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the bok choy and season with the salt and pepper. Cover and cook until tender, stirring occasionally, about 10 minutes. Stir in the vinegar and serve hot.

Serves 4 to 6.

Green Chard

Lasagna with Chard, Tomato Sauce and Ricotta

- 1 generous bunch Swiss or Green chard (about 1 1/2 pounds)
- Salt
- 1/2 pound regular or no-boil lasagna noodles

- 2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon extra virgin olive oil
 - 2 large garlic cloves, minced or pressed
 - 2 pounds fresh tomatoes, peeled, seeded and diced, or 1 (28-ounce) can chopped tomatoes, with juice
 - Pinch of sugar
 - 1 large basil sprig
 - Freshly ground pepper
 - 1/2 cup fresh ricotta cheese
 - 1/3 to 1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan
1. Bring a large pot of generously salted water to a boil while you prepare the chard. Fill a bowl with ice water. Tear the leaves from the stems and wash thoroughly in two changes of water. Discard the stems or set aside for another purpose.
 2. When the water comes to a boil, add the Swiss chard leaves. Boil 1 minute (from the time the water comes back to a boil), until tender but still bright green, then remove from the water with a slotted spoon or skimmer and transfer to the ice water. Drain and squeeze out excess water. Chop coarsely and set aside. Cook the lasagna noodles in the same pot of water if not using no-boil lasagna noodles. Remove the pasta from the pot and toss with 1 teaspoon olive oil in a bowl.
 3. In a wide, nonstick frying pan, heat 1 tablespoon of the olive oil over medium heat and add the garlic. Cook, stirring, just until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add the tomatoes, sugar, basil sprig, and salt (begin with 1/2 teaspoon and add more later), and bring to a simmer. Simmer, stirring often, until thick, 15 to 25 minutes, depending on the amount of juice in the pan. Taste and adjust seasonings. Remove the basil sprig. Stir in the Swiss chard and remove from the heat.
 4. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Oil a square or rectangular baking dish (no bigger than 2-quart) and line the bottom with a layer of lasagna noodles. Spread half the ricotta over the noodles and half the tomato-chard sauce over the ricotta. Sprinkle 2 tablespoons Parmesan over the tomato-chard sauce. Add another layer of noodles and top with the remaining ricotta and tomato-chard sauce, and 2 tablespoons Parmesan. Finish with a layer of noodles and the remaining Parmesan. Drizzle the remaining tablespoon of olive oil over the top. Cover the dish tightly with foil. Bake 30 minutes, or until bubbling and the pasta is tender. Uncover, allow to sit for 5 minutes, then serve.

Yield: Serves 4 to 6

Advance preparation: You can blanch the chard and make the sauce up to 3 days ahead. Refrigerate in covered containers. The lasagna can be assembled a day ahead of time and refrigerated until shortly before baking.

Seared Green Chard

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced
- 10 to 12 cups green chard (2 bunches trimmed and coarsely chopped)

- Grated nutmeg, to your taste
- Coarse salt and pepper
- 2 tablespoons red wine or cider vinegar

Make sure your greens are very dry before preparing recipe. Also, wash and chop them when you come in from market, then they are ready for you to cook up even quicker.

Heat the oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add onions and toss 2 minutes, then add chard in bunches and keep it moving as it wilts up a bit - you are just searing it up. The greens should remain crisp and crunchy. Wilting them all and searing them up should take no more than 3 to 4 minutes. Season the greens with nutmeg and salt and pepper, to taste. Douse the pan with a little vinegar and remove from heat. Toss to cook off vinegar and serve the greens hot.

Eggplant

Mediterranean Stuffed Eggplant

Broiled Italian eggplant halves stuffed with chicken, bell pepper, onion, garlic, tomatoes, barley, spinach and basil. Sprinkled with Romano cheese.

- 4 small Italian Eggplants
- 8 ounces Ground Chicken
- 2 medium Bell Peppers, chopped
- 1 medium Onion, chopped
- 2 teaspoons minced Garlic
- 1 (14 1/2 ounces) can Diced Tomatoes
- 1 cup Water
- 1/2 cup Regular Pearl Barley
- 2 cups Baby Spinach
- 3 tablespoons chopped Basil
- 2 tablespoons grated Romano Cheese

1. Line rimmed baking dish with aluminum foil. Spray with non-stick cooking spray.
2. Cut eggplants in half lengthwise. Scoop out flesh. Leave a 1/2" thick shell.
3. Coat eggplants with nonstick spray, invert on baking sheet.
4. Finely chop the eggplant flesh that was scooped out.
5. Preheat non-stick skillet over medium heat. Add ground chicken, bell pepper, onion, chopped eggplant and garlic to skillet. Cook 4 minutes. Reduce heat to low. Add diced tomatoes, water and pearl barley.
6. Preheat broiler. Broil eggplant shells 12 minutes or until lightly charred and soft. Turn once, halfway through the broiling process. Remove from oven and place on wire rack.
7. Stir spinach and basil into chicken mixture. Spoon into eggplant halves.

8. Sprinkle eggplant halves with Romano cheese.

Creole Aubergine

Eggplant casserole featuring onions, green bell pepper, garlic, mushrooms and diced tomatoes. Seasoned with basil, bay leaf, oregano, thyme, cayenne, and black pepper and topped with cheese and bread crumbs.

- Eggplant, cubed, sprinkled with salt, and placed in colander 20 minutes
 - Kosher Salt
 - 2 tablespoons Vegetable Oil
 - 2 tablespoons Onions, chopped
 - 3 tablespoons Green Bell Peppers, chopped
 - 3 cloves Garlic, minced
 - 1/4 cup Mushrooms, sliced
 - 2 cups canned Diced Tomatoes
 - 1 (4 ounces) can Tomato Paste
 - 1/4 cup Fresh Basil, shredded
 - 1-1/2 teaspoons Ground Bay Leaves
 - 1 teaspoon Dried Oregano
 - 1/2 teaspoon Thyme
 - 1/4 teaspoon Ground Cayenne Pepper
 - Fresh Ground Black Pepper
 - 1/2 cup Yellow Cheese, grated
 - 1/2 cup Seasoned Bread Crumbs
 - 1 tablespoon Butter
1. Preheat skillet. Add vegetable oil and sauté onions and green bell pepper 3 minutes.
 2. Add mushrooms and cook additional minute.
 3. Add diced tomatoes and tomatoes to skillet.
 4. Simmer 15 minutes. Add herbs and seasonings and simmer additional 15 minutes.
 5. Preheat oven to 350 F.
 6. Boil water in large saucepan. Rinse eggplant cubes and drop into boiling water. Parboil 8 minutes or until tender.
 7. Remove eggplant to colander and drain.
 8. Arrange layer of eggplant in bottom of 10-inch x 10-inch casserole dish.
 9. Cover with tomato sauce

Smoked Mozzarella Eggplant Rolls

Grilled eggplant topped with smoked mozzarella, pesto, and tomato. Eggplant slices are rolled, secured and palced back on the grill until cheese begins to melt. Eggplant rolls are served with hot marinara for dipping.

- 1 large Eggplant, cut into 10 thin slices, salted, placed in colander 20 minutes, rinsed in cold water
- 8 slices Smoked Mozzarella
- 2 Plum Tomatoes, cut into 8 thick slices
- 3 tablespoons Pesto
- Balsamic Vinegar and Olive Oil, for drizzling (optional)
- Marinara Sauce, warmed

1. 1. Preheat grill to medium heat. Spray grill grate liberally with oil.
2. 2. Pat dry eggplant with paper towels.
3. 3. Grill eggplant slices 8-10 minutes, turning once after 5 minutes.
4. 4. Remove from grill to plate. Place mozzarella slice in center of each slice.
5. 5. Top mozzarella with dollop of pesto and place tomato slice on pesto.
6. 6. Fold eggplant in to roll. Place back on grill, seam side down.
7. 7. Heat until mozzarella begins to melt.
8. 8. Remove from grill to serving platter. Drizzle with balsamic vinegar.
9. 9. Serve hot with marinara sauce.