

# An Unusual Culinary Column: Falling in Love with Cauliflower

By Karen Kain

I am really excited to share this column with you. Until just a few weeks ago, I had no idea that I would have such an affinity for cauliflower. Get your scissors out folks, I have found some recipes that you will want to cut out.

I grew up with both my mom and dad working full time; my dad did most of the cooking. We ate lots of meat and potatoes served with a plethora of canned vegetables. Who doesn't remember canned asparagus? Needless to say, as a child I was not a fan of eating my veggies. On occasion, we would have boiled cauliflower. I learned to consume it smothered in margarine and lots of salt.

Later in life, I discovered that cauliflower was much more palatable swimming in cheese sauce. Over the past two years I have tried grated cauliflower cooked as fried rice, cauliflower pizza and one of my favorites is cauliflower hot wings. All these recipes were great, but those white florets were still not making it onto my weekly grocery list.

As of the new year, I have made efforts to cut gluten from my daily diet. I have not totally stopped eating breads, flour and pasta, but I am consciously looking at my food choices and combinations as I plan my meals. Many years ago food combining became popular and eating meat with carbohydrates was and still is, thought to be a no no. I don't eat steak of-

ten, but when I do, I really like to have a loaded baked potato as a side. I have seen recipes that had different versions of cauliflower mash, but for some reason I had a negative feeling about it. It wasn't that I had a bad cauliflower mash experience, but how could anyone replace a baked potato loaded with sour cream and butter? Like most Americans I kept eating steak and potatoes together, knowing it was a bad food combination. Of course I always feel bloated afterwards but I justified it by only eating it as a treat. Keeping up with my healthier regime I decided to try steak differently. I simply steamed up a half head of cauliflower until it was fork tender then mashed it with my hand mixer, added a small amount of butter and some freshly shredded Parmesan cheese and fell in love. This baked potato substitute has been a big shift in how I will be enjoying my meat and potatoes from now on. I highly suggest that you give it a try. Cauliflower mash can be made many different ways, just add what you would put onto a mashed potato and enjoy.

Feeling inspired I started looking into other cauliflower recipe ideas. I quickly came across this Artichoke & Cauliflower Gratin recipe. I love artichoke hearts. I have a fabulous artichoke dip recipe that is hands down the best dish to bring to a party. The only draw back is that it is full of mayonnaise and cheese, which of course, makes it so delicious. I was happy to try out this healthier combination which sounded like it would make a pretty original vegetable casserole. I like to add



extra cheese to just about any dish I make, but you can add as much or as little as you like. I think you will find this to be a super easy recipe that puts a twist on the typical veggie side dish.

I also decided to try a pasta cauliflower recipe. You can make this a gluten free and casein free meal by eliminating the Parmesan cheese and using gluten free penne pasta. This hearty and healthy recipe was easy to make and is perfect when reheated and eaten as leftovers. This recipe is really satisfying; whether you are a vegetarian or a meat eater you will like this one.

Finally, I discovered a Cauliflower Avocado Toast recipe that really sealed the deal for me. As you already know I am not a big breakfast person. The fabulous aromas that filled my house as I was frying up these easy to make cauliflower patties was totally worth the effort. This is a great bread alternative and only made better when topped with the avocado and a fried egg. I found that cauliflower toast was the perfect hearty snow shoveling meal to start my day.

I hope that you give one or all  
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The deadline to join 4-H for the 2017 year is no later than April 1st. The final new leader training is March 1st. Please contact Kara at the 4-H office for more information at (503) 397-3462. For more information regarding local Vernonia group Critters R Us please contact Susan Ely (503) 429-5709.



Some of the members of the 4-H club Critters R Us with a few of their ribbons and trophies from the 2016 Columbia County Fair.



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