



In this March 14, 2016 photo, spring breakers gather in South Beach, at Miami Beach, Fla. College students relax and have fun during their spring break. Miami remains one of the most popular destinations for spring break.

AP Photo/Alan Diaz, File

Spring break ideas: beaches, baseball, museums, Europe

NEW YORK (AP) — Spring break is right around the corner. For some travelers, that means seeking out beaches and sunshine. Others may be tempted by Europe, which has become more affordable for Americans, or by spring skiing.

AIRFARE, DESTINATIONS AND BOOKINGS

Airfares vary considerably this time of year. Travelers not tied to a holiday week may find flights are cheaper at other times. Most colleges schedule a week off in March, but family vacations often revolve around school breaks for Easter (April 16 this year) or Passover (beginning April 10).

Booking.com's data shows that travel March 18-April 30 will be 2 percent more expensive overall than last year, but a few domestic destinations are cheaper, including New Orleans, 8 percent cheaper than last spring; Miami Beach, 4 percent cheaper; and Tampa, Florida, 9 percent cheaper.

And take a look at Europe: A strong U.S. dollar has made vacations there much more affordable for Americans.

Expedia's top 10 destinations for March and April are Cancun, Mexico, followed by Orlando, Florida; Las Vegas; New York; Miami; Los Angeles; London; Punta Cana, Dominican Republic; Phoenix and Paris.

American Express Travel's top five international destinations are London, Cancun, Rome, Paris and Tel Aviv. But American Express reports a few other spots spiking compared with last year, with spring bookings to Iceland up 150 percent, to Auckland, New Zealand, up 129 percent, to Madrid up 114 percent, to Casablanca, Morocco, 103 percent, and Zurich, 101 percent.

AAA's bookings have three Florida destinations — Orlando, Fort Lauderdale and Miami — in the top five domestic destinations, along with Anaheim, California (home to Disneyland), and Las Vegas. Internationally, AAA's top five are Punta Cana, Rome, Jamaica, London and the Bahamas.

At StudentUniverse, which caters to travelers 18-26, top spring break destinations are London; Los Angeles; New York; Miami; Paris; Madrid; Orlando; Barcelona, Spain; Cancun; San Juan, Puerto Rico; Tokyo and Dublin.

Debbie Sebastian, a Travel Leaders agent in Danville, Kentucky, says she's seeing lots of "groups traveling with Punta Cana being the most popular choice this year. The flight times and charter options make it a great option."

March is typically the Miami airport's busiest month for domestic arrivals, with 1.08 million passengers in March 2016.

Karen Malone, with Travel Leaders in Woodbury, Minnesota, says in addition to the Dominican



In this March 27, 2016, file photo, a visitor take pictures of cherry blossom trees in full bloom on the tidal basin in Washington, D.C. The National Cherry Blossom Festival runs March 20-April 16 this year with various Japanese-themed events, though bloom times vary depending on the weather.

AP Photo/Jose Luis Magana, File

In this Jan. 12 file photo, a sword that belonged to General Hugh Mercer is displayed at the new Museum of the American Revolution in Philadelphia. Mercer, who was a friend of George Washington fought and died of wounds sustained during the American Revolution. The museum is scheduled to open April 19.

AP Photo/Matt Rourke, File



In this March 30, 2016, file photo, young baseball fans watch as Texas Rangers center fielder Delino DeShields throws the ball away during the team's spring training baseball game against the Kansas City Royals in Surprise, Ariz. Baseball fans often schedule spring break trips around spring training games for their favorite teams in Arizona or Florida.

AP Photo/Jae C. Hong, File

Republic, Jamaica is also proving popular, with both destinations offering new resort choices. "We here in the frozen North are attracted to those turquoise blue waters and white sand beaches," she said.

Cancun's always big for spring break, but it's not just a destination for the pina colada-and-party crowd. "Cancun also serves as the gateway for more quiet environs like Isla Mujeres, which is growing in popularity, as well as the entire Riviera Maya and all points directly south of Cancun, including Playa del Carmen," said Travel Leaders spokesman Steven Loucks. The region has all-inclusive resorts for every kind of traveler — couples, families, multigenerational groups.

SPRING SKIING, SPRING TRAINING

Some ski resorts schedule fun events to mark the end of winter, from concerts to costume contests and parties with a beach-and-barbecue theme. Vail, Colorado's Spring Back to Vail festival

is April 14-16 and includes the World Pond Skimming Championships, where skiers land in the water. Breckenridge, Colorado, has a Spring Fever festival, April 1-23.

Baseball fans often schedule trips to catch their favorite MLB teams getting ready for opening day. Late February through April 1, the Cactus League plays in the Phoenix area, the Grapefruit League plays in Florida.

CULTURE VULTURES

Not everybody hits the beach for spring break and not every family heads to theme parks. Wendy Perrin, founder of the travel planning site WendyPerrin.com, says her best spring vacations with two boys have been to Colonial Williamsburg in Williamsburg, Virginia; Paris; and a Panama Canal cruise. This year, she's taking the family to Morocco, "to introduce the kids to a completely different culture."

If you like visiting museums, note two important openings this spring: the American Writers Museum

in Chicago on May 16 and the Museum of the American Revolution in Philadelphia on April 19.

Other noteworthy events include the Whitney Museum of American Art's Biennial 2017 in New York, a contemporary art survey opening March 17; in Kansas City, Missouri, special exhibitions at the National World War I Museum and an April 6 commemoration of the centennial of America's 1917 entry into the war; and at the Dallas Museum of Art, opening March 12, a survey of 200 works of Mexican modern art by Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo and others. A new attraction opens at Graceland in early March, "Elvis Presley's Memphis," with museum exhibits, a stage and more.

Finally, spring means flowers. In Washington, D.C., the National Cherry Blossom Festival runs March 20-April 16 with various Japanese-themed events, though bloom times vary depending on the weather.



Melissa d'Arabian via AP

Pizza made with a cauliflower crust.

For pizza crust with a big dose of vitamins, try cauliflower

By MELISSA D'ARABIAN
Associated Press

Cauliflower is a wonder-veggie. No longer relegated to boiling and covering with a bright orange cheese sauce (sorry, Mom), cauliflower is stepping out in the place of starch like rice in stir-fries or instead of wheat flour in pizza dough.

Cauliflower is mild, so it takes on whatever flavors you throw at it, which helps it be the convincing chameleon that it is. Cauliflower is as healthy as our moms told us, providing a hefty dose of vitamins, including C, K, B6 and folate, as well as smaller doses of other vitamins and minerals, plus filling protein and fiber. All in about 25 calories per cup.

So, it's a worthy vegetable, and now that it is available in "riced" form in mainstream grocery stores across the country, it's time to take a look if you haven't already. Let's start with pizza crust. Steamed, riced cauliflower is mixed with a binder (usually egg and cheese), and then shaped into a pizza crust shape, baked and then topped with traditional pizza toppings. Bake up a few of these crusts and keep in the freezer for last minute pizza night that is healthier than takeout.

Since my daughter is gluten-intolerant, I've been making pizza crust for years with cauliflower, resulting in a few key

pieces of advice from the trenches. The biggest challenge with cauliflower crust is keeping it together, since there is no stretchy gluten working for you.

But, no problem, if you follow my tips: First, once you cook the cauliflower, make sure to squeeze out as much moisture as possible. Excess water will keep the crust from staying together. In fact, I like to go a tiny step further and add just a little bit of absorbent flour — just a tablespoon or two of coconut or oat flour make a big difference.

Next tip: bake the crust and flip it over before adding any toppings. If you aren't flipping it, you can't get the firm crusty texture to form, and that really helps the crust taste and feel pizza-like.

Final tip: make smaller pizza crusts instead of one big huge one. They are just easier to manage and keep intact. Top your pizza crust with whatever toppings you like — lots of cheese and meat if you're simply eating low-carb, or load up with roasted veggies and a light sprinkling of part-skim mozzarella if you want to stay low-cal. But for the crust, follow my recipe for the no-fail step-by-step.

Food Network star Melissa d'Arabian is an expert on healthy eating on a budget. She is the author of the cookbook "Supermarket Healthy."

CAULIFLOWER PIZZA CRUST

Start to finish: 40 minutes

Servings: 4 small pizza crusts, 1 per serving

- 4-5 cups "riced" cauliflower (buy it riced, or pulse in food processor until rice-sized)
- 1 egg
- ½ cup grated parmesan cheese
- ½ cup grated part-skim mozzarella cheese
- 1 ½ teaspoons granulated garlic
- 2 teaspoons Italian seasoning
- 2 tablespoons of coconut flour (or other absorbent flour, such as oat or quinoa flour)
- fine cornmeal for sprinkling, optional
- salt and pepper

Heat oven to 400 F. Place the riced cauliflower in a microwave-safe dish with 2 tablespoons of water, cover and cook in microwave for 4-5 minutes, or until tender but not mushy. Remove from microwave, drain off water, gently pressing out excess moisture with a spoon, and cool.

Meanwhile, in a large bowl, whisk the egg with the cheeses, garlic and Italian seasoning. Place the cooled cauliflower in several paper towels, or in a thin clean dish towel, and gently but firmly squeeze out excess moisture. (You may be surprised by how much liquid you can squeeze out.)

Add the squeeze cauliflower to the egg and cheese mixture. Sprinkle in the coconut flour, salt and pepper and mix well. Mixture will not stick together like regular dough.

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and spray with nonstick spray. Divide the dough into 3 or 4 rounds, and gently shape them into pizza crusts, doing your best to push the dough together to make clean edges. Bake until dark golden brown, about 20 minutes. Remove from the oven and let cool for 5-10 minutes. Flip with a spatula. If using, sprinkle the bottom of the sheet with a little cornmeal when you flip the crusts.

Top the crusts with any sauce, cheese, toppings and bake until melted, about 10 more minutes.

Tip: You can bake extra crusts without toppings and freeze them for future use.

Nutrition information per serving: 157 calories; 70 calories from fat; 8 g fat (4 g saturated); 0 g trans fats; 70 mg cholesterol; 495 mg sodium; 12 g carbohydrate; 4 g fiber; 3 g sugar; 11 g protein.