



Orange Cauliflower

An inspired recipe by Maggie Zhu that is perfect to serve for Chinese New Year

- 1 small head cauliflower (about 1-1/2 to 2 pounds), cut into 1-inch florets
- 1/4 teaspoon table salt
- 1 Tablespoon finely chopped orange peel
- 1/4 cup mandarin orange juice
- 3 Tablespoons rice vinegar
- 1 Tablespoon light soy sauce
- 1 Tablespoon Shaoxing wine
- 2 Tablespoons granulated sugar
- 1 Tablespoon plus 1/2 cup cornstarch, divided
- 1/4 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 2 Tablespoons almond milk
- 1 Tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1/3 cup peanut oil or vegetable oil
- 3 scallions, sliced, white and green parts separated
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- Garnish: 1/3 cup mandarin orange segments; 3 to 4 Tablespoons smoked or plain whole almonds

1. Place cauliflower florets in a large bowl; add table salt; toss to coat. Let stand for 15 to 20 minutes to marinate while you prepare the other ingredients.
2. In a medium bowl, combine the orange peel, orange juice, vinegar, soy sauce, wine, sugar, 1 Tablespoon cornstarch and sea salt for the sauce. Stir until the cornstarch is dissolved.
3. Right before cooking, use paper towels to dry off any excess moisture from the cauliflower. Add almond milk and vegetable oil to the cauliflower; mix a few times. Add remaining ½ cup cornstarch; stir gently to coat all the cauliflower pieces.
4. In a large skillet, heat the peanut oil over medium high heat until hot. Add the cauliflower pieces, one at a time, without overlapping. You may need to cook in two or three batches. Let cook undisturbed until the bottoms turn golden, 2 minutes or so. Flip over; cook the other sides until golden, reducing the heat to medium or medium-low if oil starts to splatter. Transfer the cauliflower to a large plate and let cool for 2 to 3 minutes to crisp up the crust.
5. There should be 1 to 2 Tablespoons of oil left in the pan. If there is more, wipe off the excess oil with a few layers of paper towels. Turn the heat to medium and add the white parts of the scallions and the garlic to the pan, stirring a few times until fragrant. Stir the sauce again to make sure the cornstarch is dissolved, then pour it into the pan. Cook and stir until the sauce thickens. Add the cauliflower back into the pan; stir to coat with the sauce.
6. Transfer the contents of the pan to a large plate, top with the green parts of the scallions, orange segments, and smoked almonds; serve hot.

Cook's Note: I used mandarin oranges and juice from a jar of Dole Mandarin Oranges. I also found that I could use the fine chopped skin of Frieda's kumquats in place of orange peel. The taste of the orange was a refreshing flavor accent to the sweet cauliflower.

Recipe Inspired by: Maggie Zhu, *Chinese Homestyle*, Quarto Publishing Group Inc., 2022. Recipe: Orange Cauliflower, p. 81.

About the Recipe: The skillet-fried crispy cauliflower is covered with a fruity, lightly sweetened sauce that is fragrant and syrupy. The mandarin oranges add a complex orange flavor with bits of tangy minced rind. This is a perfect recipe to serve for Chinese New Year.