



Ditch the dairy to make the most flavorful, creamy soup

By Sara Moulton

This time of year, with the weather getting colder, I love to serve soup for supper. It's an easy sell at my house, where The Husband is a soupaholic. But with a soup this good, I firmly believe you can sell anyone on it. The trick is to amp up the flavor, vary the texture, and make it substantial.

Here I started by roasting - not boiling - the cauliflower. Roasting eliminates excess water, brings the natural sugars to the fore, and concentrates the flavors (adding some nuttiness in the process). Next, I make sure not to obscure the cauliflower's flavor with too many other ingredients. Yes, there is onion and garlic, but they play only supporting roles. Likewise, the stock, diluted with water, is designed not to overwhelm. The greens - because they're not pureed,

and not added until the very end - pack a satisfying little punch of their own without compromising the cauliflower taste.

The right tool for pureeing a soup is a blender. Neither a food processor nor an immersion blender will make it quite as smooth. Just take care not to pack the blender with too much hot soup at a time. At the end of the recipe, to provide some crunchy contrast to the creamy base, I added roasted cauliflower florets. Finally, there are those garlicky cheese rye toasts - Yum! - which contribute yet more crunch as well as big flavor, whether you tear them up and toss the pieces into the soup or happily munch them on the side. The finished product is a tasty, hearty, healthy and affordable soup for supper. And if you use vegetable broth, it's vegetarian, too. Either way, it's fully capable of standing on its own, or with just a small salad.

ROASTED CAULIFLOWER AND GREENS SOUP WITH CHEESY RYE TOASTS

Ingredients

Start to finish: 1 hour (35 minutes active)

Servings: 4

1 head cauliflower (about 2 1/2 pounds)

3 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided

Salt

1 cup sliced yellow onion

2 teaspoons minced garlic

1 medium Yukon Gold potato (about 3 to 4 ounces), thinly sliced

3 cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth

2 cups water

5 ounces baby greens (such as kale, spinach, arugula, mustard or a mix)

1 tablespoon lemon juice

Ground black pepper

4 slices rye bread

1 ounce grated Parmesan cheese

Heat the oven to 450 F.

Preparation

Cut off and discard the tough bottom of the cauliflower stem. Separate 3 cups of small cauliflower florets (each about 1/2 inch in diameter) and set aside. Cut the rest of the cauliflower into 1-inch pieces, then mound them on a rimmed baking sheet. Drizzle with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil and sprinkle with about 1/2 teaspoon of salt. Toss well to coat, then spread in an even layer. Roast on the oven's middle shelf, stirring once or twice, until it is golden brown at the edges, 20 to 25 minutes.

In a large saucepan over medium, heat 1 tablespoon of the remaining oil. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add the potato, the roasted cauliflower, the broth and water. Simmer the mixture until the potato is tender, about 15 minutes. While the soup is simmering, on the rimmed sheet pan, toss the reserved florets with 2 teaspoons of oil and about 1/4 teaspoon of salt. Roast until they are golden brown and tender, about 20 minutes.



Transfer the hot soup in small batches to a blender and blend until smooth. Return the soup to the saucepan, stir in the greens and simmer until they are wilted and tender, about 5 minutes. Add the roasted florets and cook for 1 minute. Add the lemon juice, then season with salt and pepper. Adjust the consistency, as desired, with an additional splash or two of water.

Brush the rye bread with the remaining tablespoon of oil and toast on the oven's middle shelf until golden, about 5 minutes. Sprinkle the cheese evenly over the toasts and return to the oven and bake for another 2 minutes. Ladle the soup into serving bowls and serve each portion with a toast.