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Steamed Cauliflower with a Spicy Tomato Sauce

My parents entertained often when I was a young child, and this dish would appear time and again on my mother's menus. It's easy to prepare, the presentation is quite impressive, and it's tasty as well – all necessary ingredients in a party dish.

2 small heads cauliflower (about 1 pound 12 ounces)
2 cups water
1 teaspoon salt, divided
1/2 teaspoon cumin seeds
1 teaspoon coriander seeds
3 tablespoons canola oil
1 teaspoon finely grated fresh ginger (about a 2-inch piece)
1 teaspoon finely grated garlic (about 2 large cloves)
1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric
One 14.5-ounce can peeled, chopped tomatoes
1 medium green Serrano chile, cut lengthwise in quarters
1/2 teaspoon cayenne
2 tablespoons minced cilantro leaves

Remove any leaves and cut off the tough stem parts of the cauliflower. Place the heads in a saucepan large enough to hold them comfortably, with the water and 1/2 teaspoon of the salt. Cover and simmer until the cauliflower is crisp-tender, about 10 minutes. If you like your cauliflower softer, by all means cook it longer. Set it aside and cover to keep warm while you make the sauce.

Roast the spices: Heat a small skillet over low heat and roast the cumin seeds until dark and fragrant. Remove the cumin from the pan and set aside to cool. Now add the coriander seeds and slowly roast them until dark brown. Be careful not to burn the spices. When the coriander seeds have also cooled, use a clean coffee grinder to grind them with the cumin seeds and set aside.

Heat the oil in a large saucepan and add the ginger, garlic, and turmeric. Stir constantly over medium heat until the mixture turns golden brown. This will happen quickly, so be careful it doesn't burn. Crush the tomatoes with your hands and add them to the pan along with all the juices. When the tomatoes come to a boil, stir in the chile, cayenne, cumin, coriander, and remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt. Lower the heat and simmer the sauce until the tomatoes are well cooked, about 8 minutes. You will be able to tell by the fact that the oil will start to separate from the sauce. Add the cilantro and simmer for another 1 to 2 minutes to heat through.

Place the warm whole cauliflower on a platter, pour the sauce over the top, and serve immediately. Serves 4 to 6.