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Tandoori Cauliflower with Mint Chutney

Makes 4 servings

Cauliflower is a member of the cabbage family. The plant's flower stalks are forced to grow in on themselves, forming a dense mass or curd. Because the stalks never fully mature, they do not become very fibrous. But they are rich in pectin, which is why grilled cauliflower is so creamy, and why overcooked boiled cauliflower turns to mush. To keep the curd pale white, the outer leaves are tied around the cauliflower head, which shields the curd from sunlight and limits the development of green chlorophyll through photosynthesis. We like to grill-roast cauliflower and jolt its mild flavor profile with Indian spices and a refreshing splash of mint chutney. Serve it as a side dish for fish or chicken or as the centerpiece of a vegetarian meal.

INGREDIENTS:

1 head cauliflower, cut into large florets (about 4 cups)
2 cups Tandoori Yogurt Marinade (see below)

Mint Chutney:

1/2 cup fresh mint leaves and small stems
1/3 cup fresh cilantro leaves and small stems
1/2 small onion, coarsely chopped (about 1/4 cup)
1 clove garlic, coarsely chopped
1 small serrano chile pepper, stemmed and coarsely chopped (remove seeds for less heat)
Juice of 1 lime
2 tablespoons water
1/2 teaspoon course salt

DIRECTIONS:

Combine the cauliflower and marinade in a 1-gallon zipper-lock bag. Press out the air, seal the bag, and refrigerate for 3 to 4 hours.

For the mint chutney: Combine the mint leaves, cilantro leaves, onion, garlic, chile pepper, lime juice, water, and salt in a small food processor or blender. Blend until relatively smooth. Scrape into a small serving bowl and set aside.

Light a grill for indirect medium-high heat, about 400°F. Put a disposable aluminum pan beneath the grill grate over the unheated area of the grill. Fill the pan with 1/2 inch of hot water. Set the grill grate in place, brush it, and coat with oil.

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Remove the cauliflower from the marinade, reserving the marinade. Put the cauliflower florets on the grill so they are over the pan of water. Close the lid and cook until fork-tender, 20 to 30 minutes. Dab the florets with some of the remaining marinade just before removing from the heat.

Serve hot with the chutney.

Tandoori Yogurt Marinade

Best with veal, chicken, turkey, lamb, vegetables.
Makes about 1 cup.

3/4 cup (6 ounces) plain yogurt
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger
2 large garlic cloves, minced
1 tablespoon Garam Masala
1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric
1 tablespoon paprika
1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro
1 tablespoon minced fresh onion
1/2 tsp. red food coloring (optional)

Mix everything together and use as directed in a recipe.