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Cauliflower Gratin

Serves 4

This luxurious bread crumb and Parmesan-topped cauliflower gratin is a nearly perfect, savory dish. The crisp crust accents the creamy cauliflower and is delightfully seasoned with thyme and nutmeg. The cheddar and garlic-infused cream adds just the right saltiness and depth of flavor for a very satisfying experience.

Ingredients:

1 tablespoon olive oil
1/4 cup fresh Italian-style bread crumbs
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese, separated
2 small heads of cauliflower or 1 large head, cut into large florets
1-1/2 cups heavy cream
2 cloves garlic, minced
3 tablespoons salted butter, melted
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1/2 teaspoon Kosher salt
1/8 teaspoon grated nutmeg
1 cup cheddar cheese, grated
2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves, removed from stem

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400° F. Butter one larger or two smaller shallow baking dishes.
2. In a small bowl, combine the olive oil, bread crumbs and the Parmesan cheese. Set aside and reserve for the last baking step.
3. Prep, then boil the cauliflower florets in a large pot of salted water for 2-3 minutes, then drain. Do not overcook, the cauliflower will continue to bake in the gratin.
4. In a saucepan, combine the cream and garlic and cook over low heat. Simmer for 3 minutes until the garlic flavors infuse into the cream.
5. In a large bowl, toss to combine the parboiled cauliflower, cream and garlic mixture, melted butter, pepper, salt, nutmeg, and grated cheddar cheese. Transfer to one or two gratin baking dishes (or individual ramekins). Cover the gratins tightly with foil and bake for 30 minutes. Pro tip: Place a sheet pan on the shelf below the gratins to catch any "bubbling over" spills.

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6. Remove the foil and bake for another 10 minutes, until the cream has thickened.
7. Sprinkle the gratin with the reserved bread crumb and cheese mixture, and then return to the oven, uncovered, for a final 10 minutes. Bake until the top is golden brown.
8. Sprinkle the baked gratin with fresh thyme leaves and serve while hot.