Stinky Cauliflower Packs Strong Vitamins
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Jo Shuford-Law, Extension Agent IV, Leon County Extension Service—Family & Consumer Sciences

What’s so great about cauliflower or “cabbage flower”? Cauliflower is a cruciferous vegetable and a member of the cabbage family. Cruciferous vegetables are rich in phytochemicals, such as; isothiocyanates, indoles, lutein and sulforaphan. These powerful substances may help prevent certain cancers and may also play a role in optimal eye health. Other cruciferous vegetables include broccoli, Brussels sprouts, kale, collards, rutabaga, and kohlrabi, bok choy and turnips. There are also some more pungent relatives including, mustard and mustard greens, horseradish, radish, watercress, and arugula.

Cauliflower is an excellent source of vitamin C and a good source of fiber. The vegetable is also a source of vitamin K, folate, and potassium. Like most vegetables, cauliflower is low in fat, cholesterol, and calories; one cup of raw cauliflower having only about 25 calories.

When buying cauliflower, select a head that is compact, solid, white to creamy white with clean flowerets. Speckles on the cauliflower head are a sign of insect injury, mold growth, or decay, and should be avoided. Flowerets that have begun to spread indicate the head is overly mature. Store unwashed cauliflower in a plastic bag in the vegetable crisper of the refrigerator. Refrigerated cauliflower will keep for up to seven days.

Cauliflower can be eaten raw or cooked. Do not wash cauliflower until it is ready to be used. Trim the cauliflower. Pull off outer leaves. Cut off the stem end close to the head. Instead of boiling cauliflower, steam or microwave, as boiling destroys 50% of the vitamin C content.

Cauliflower can release a strong, somewhat unpleasant smell when cooked. To avoid this, cook cauliflower quickly. Place cauliflower stem side down in a pot containing about two inches of boiling water. Cover. After two to three minutes of steaming, remove the cover for 15 seconds. Removing the cover allows some of the odors to escape. Add a little lemon juice or vinegar to retain whiteness and to better preserve its vitamin content. For florets cooking time is three to six minutes. For whole cauliflower, cooking time is about 10 to 15 minutes.

To microwave, place two cups of florets in a nine inch microwaveable container. Add 1/4 water and cover. Cook three minutes on high. Then let the covered container stand two more minutes to complete cooking.

Cauliflower is inexpensive and can be found year round fresh or frozen. Prepare as a side dish, or mixed with other foods as part of a main course. Try the following recipe that makes use of raw cauliflower and fellow cruciferous vegetable, broccoli.

Veggie Pasta Salad
Number of servings: 8, 1 cup each

10 oz. rotini pasta
1 head cauliflower
1 head broccoli
2 bunches green onions, diced
1 cup fat-free Italian salad dressing, divided
8 oz. fresh mushrooms, sliced
4 tomatoes, diced

1. Cook pasta according to package directions, drain and cool.
2. Clean cauliflower and broccoli and cut into florets.

3. In a large bowl, combine cauliflower, broccoli, and green onions.

4. Add 2/3 cup dressing to vegetables and stir gently.

5. Place vegetable mixture in the refrigerator for at least 4 hours.

6. Just before serving, add mushrooms, tomatoes, and remaining dressing. Mix well and serve.

Nutrition Information per Serving: Calories 110, Total Fat 1 g (1% DV), Saturated Fat 0 g (0% DV), Cholesterol 0 mg (0% DV), Sodium 450 mg (19% DV), Total Carbohydrate 21 g (7% DV), Dietary Fiber 4 g (16% DV), Sugars 6 g, Protein 6 g, Vitamin A 15%, Vitamin C 120%, Calcium 4%, Iron 4%.

Sources: University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension, http://lancaster.unl.edu/nep/fruitveggie.shtml
University of Georgia Cooperative Extension – Thomas County

If you have a question, write to Jo Shuford-Law, Extension Agent Family and Consumer Sciences, University of Florida/IFAS Extension--Leon County, 615 Paul Russell Road, Tallahassee, FL 32301-7099; or call the Extension Office 487-3006, between 8 a.m. to noon or 1 to 5 p.m. weekdays.

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