

Cauliflower-Bacon Gratin

Around My French Table, Dorie Greenspan

1 cauliflower
1/4 pound bacon, cut crosswise into slender strips
1/3 cup all-purpose flour
5 large eggs, lightly beaten
1 cup heavy cream
2/3 cup whole milk
Salt and freshly ground pepper
Freshly grated nutmeg
3 ounces Gruyere (you can use Emmenthal, or even Swiss in a pinch), grated

Center a rack in the oven and preheat the oven to 425 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with a silicone baking mat or parchment paper. Generously butter an oven-going pan that hold about 2 1/2 quarts. (It's not elegant and it's a tad too big, but a 9-by-13- inch Pyrex pan is fine.) Put the dish on the baking sheet.

Put a large pot of salted water on to boil. Pull or cut the florets from the cauliflower, leaving about an inch or so of stem. Drop the florets into the boiling water and cook for 10 minutes. Drain, rinse the cauliflower under cold running water to cool it down, and pat it dry. (Alternatively, you can steam the florets over salted water. When they're fork-tender, drain and pat dry.)

While the cauliflower is cooking, toss the bacon strips into a heavy skillet, put the skillet over medium heat, and cook just until the bacon is browned but not crisp. Drain and pat dry.

Spread the cauliflower out in the buttered pan, and scatter over the bacon bits.

Put the flour in a bowl and gradually whisk in the eggs. When the flour and eggs are blended, whisk in the cream and milk. Season the mixture with salt, pepper and nutmeg, and stir in about two thirds of the cheese. Pour the mixture over the cauliflower, shake the pan a little so that the liquid settles between the florets, and scatter over the remaining cheese.

Bake the gratin for about 25 minutes, or until it is puffed and golden and a knife inserted into the center comes out clean. If the top isn't as brown as you'd like it to be, run it under the broiler for a couple of minutes.