

## Nutri-Notes

Cauliflower—a bouquet in a bunch!

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Purple or white, cauli- or brocco-flower, the cauliflower is a cabbage bouquet. Did you know that those short stalks that frame the cauliflower head are edible? If you've selected a relatively young cauliflower, available this time of year, the stalks will be tender. You can peel them away from the head, trim off the leaves and munch on them instead of carrot sticks or celery. They will have a green cabbage taste. If you're cooking, you can slice or chop the stalks and add them to soups, stirfries, rice or stew.

The part of the cauliflower that you're used to eating, the white center, is actually a bunch of undeveloped flower buds. You can find cauliflower in white and purple, and broccoflower in light green. Try to select the whitest, purple-est or pale green-est head. You don't want the center to have a faded color or to have small flowers. That means it's a little past its prime and will have too strong a cabbage flavor. Every variety of cauliflower should have bright green, crisp leaves.

Don't get too excited about the purple in purple cauliflower-it turns pale green or white when it's cooked! If you want your guests to believe you found a purple cauliflower, you better cut a piece off before you cook it. Broccoflower is a cross between broccoli and cauliflower, with the texture of cauliflower and the taste of mild broccoli. No matter the color, store unwashed cauliflower in a perforated plastic bag in the refrigerator. Remember that you are harboring a member of the cabbage family. Even though cauliflower will hold its crispness for a week, the older it gets, the stronger the flavor.

Cauliflower is a great snack food. Purchase a perfect head, trim off the leaves, and cut up the buds and the stalks. You can eat them plain, alternate them with other crunchy veggies, such as snap peas and cherry tomatoes or toss them with your favorite salad ingredients.

If limiting starch is on your menu, many restaurants are offering pureed cauliflower as an alternate to mashed potatoes. Cooked cauliflower can be pureed with herbs or spices of your choosing, and served instead of the potato portion of your meal.

If you would like to cook cauliflower, be sure to take the gentle approach. Cauliflower cooks very quickly and doesn't like to hang around. Microwave or steam cauliflower buds in a small amount of water or broth, drain and toss with white pepper and chopped parsley. If you have extra cooked cauliflower, add it to a can of soup, like tomato or cream of chicken. Although it is pretty far removed from an orange, cauliflower has a lot of Vitamin C. It is also a good source of folic acid, potassium and niacin.