Cauliflower

Cauliflower is a member of the vegetable genus, *Brassica*, which include broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, collard greens, kale, and kohlrabi. Often times cauliflower is grown side by side with broccoli. They have similar growing patterns with large leaves that surround a flowering area at the top of the plant.

Fall is the best season to plant cauliflower because the plant will mature in the cool weather that it likes. Most popular varieties are white, but the purple head is said to be more flavorful and more tolerant of the heat which we do have in fall and winter here in the Santa Clarita valley!

Start seeds indoors in September for transplanting into your garden in November. For a second crop in spring, start seeds indoors in December. Plant seeds ¼ inch deep and 1 to 2 inches apart in pots or flats, and watch for germination in 5 to 10 days. Keep warm (70 degrees F.) until sprouted; move to full sunlight as soon as the first shoots appear. After hardening off, plant out seedlings that have at least 6 leaves. Bury 1 inch of each plant's stem, leaving 16 to 18 inches between plants. Dig in good organic fertilizer around each plant 3 weeks after transplanting.

For white varieties, when heads start to form (about 2 inches in diameter) tie the large leaves around the top to protect the head from exposure to the sun, which can turn the head yellow. Cut off the entire head at its base with a sharp knife or clippers. Do not delay harvest, as the head will grow fast and pass the harvest point in just a few days. Each cauliflower plant only produces one head so after harvesting, take out the plant and add to the compost bins.

Health Benefits of Cauliflower

- Cauliflower contains sulforaphane, a sulfur compound that has been shown to kill cancer stem cells, thereby slowing tumor growth. Some researchers believe eliminating cancer stem cells may be key to controlling cancer.
- Sulforaphane in cauliflower has been found to significantly improve blood pressure and kidney function.
- Cauliflower contains a wealth of anti-inflammatory nutrients to help keep inflammation in check.
- Cauliflower is an important source of dietary fiber for digestive health.
- Eating cauliflower is like winning the antioxidant and phytonutrient lottery.

Top Seed Picks

'Maystar', 'Purple Cape', 'Early Snowball', 'Graffiti Hybrid', 'Brocoverde'

Roasted Cauliflower

Once you've tasted roasted cauliflower, you'll never go back to boiling or steaming it again! The cauliflower florets are not mushy but softened slightly with a bit of a crunch. Roasting the cauliflower intensifies the flavor and gives it a nutty taste. If you've never roasted cauliflower, try it now!

Cook time: 20-25 minutes   Yield: Serves 4

Ingredients:

- 1 large head cauliflower (about 3 pounds)
- 2 to 3 T. olive oil
- 1 t. coarse salt
- ¼ t. minced garlic
- Pepper to taste

Method:

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F.

Rinse cauliflower and cut into quarters. Cut off and discard leaves and core. Cut quarters into ¼ to ½ inch thick slices or wedges

In a large bowl or re-sealable plastic bag, mix together cauliflower slices, olive oil, garlic, salt, and pepper.

Spread in a single layer in a non-stick baking dish, or foil lined rimmed baking sheet.

Bake prepared cauliflower approximately 20 to 25 minutes, turning every 10 minutes, or until cauliflower is browned or caramelized on edges and tender.

Remove from oven and serve warm or at room temperature.