



gf new series

Good golly, it's cauli!

Each month **Emma Freud** explores the British food scene – she begins by creating a six-course meal made entirely of cauliflower

It has happened. I've finally mastered the magic trick available to women in their fifties: all I need to do is look at a plate of food and it automatically embeds itself onto my thighs. Well done me.

There now seem to be two choices: consume a thimbleful of carbohydrates three times a day, or say goodbye to pizza, pasta and potatoes. I have chosen the latter. And that decision led me to a meal I never thought it would be my role in life to consume.

There is absolutely nothing glamorous about a cauliflower, but if you're looking to reduce carbs and still end supper with a full stomach, it has three impressive tricks. It passes as an impressive meat substitute – feistier than tofu, some vegan Chinese restaurants batter it, deep-fry it and serve with a sweet & sour sauce. If you blitz it quickly in a blender, it becomes rice-like. If you blitz it for longer, you get a moist flour that works for a sponge or bread.

Yotam Ottolenghi, who's been championing the cauliflower for so long it's virtually his middle name, roasts it whole as a starter, grates it to make frittatas, and has fashioned it with eggs and rosemary into a savoury cake (visit bbcgoodfood.com/cauliflower-cake for *Good Food's* version).

My thighs and I decided to explore the breadth of this humble vegetable by creating a unique dinner entitled 'Cauliflower Six Ways'. My children opted for a takeaway, so the current boyfriend had to take the hit. It may not have been my finest culinary hour, but it was inexpensive, full of big flavours and, as an added bonus, by the end we were slightly hysterical.

The starter Cauliflower pizza. I hate to admit it, but when you blitz cauliflower into a pulp, microwave it for a couple of minutes, add an egg, some grated cheese, seasoning and herbs, it turns into a surprisingly good pizza crust. It didn't fool my children, but it did convince my stomach that I'd consumed something other than yet another vegetable. (Find one to try at bbcgoodfood.com.)

The steak This was a revelation. You cut a (guess what) cauliflower into thick slices, brush them with a mixture of olive oil, salt, pepper, chilli flakes and cumin, and sear on a hot griddle pan until they are

so golden brown that you can't quite tell they were cauliflower in the first place. Tasty.

The salad I blitzed the white part of a cauli (the third one of the evening and we were now on first-name terms) in a blender and used the 'rice' to make the hero dish of the meal – a warm Moroccan salad. It's gorgeous, and so light you can eat a truckload of it while still dropping a dress size.

The side dish Pickle Surprise. I used the American recipe for bread & butter pickles and cauliflowered it – that was the surprise. They were very popular with my audience of one, though he was beginning to wilt a little. This is how the magic happens: mix a headsworth (cauliflower term, advanced level) of florettes together with a handful of Maldon salt and a finely chopped onion. After three hours, drain the liquid and put in a pan with a mug of cider vinegar, a mug of sugar, a handful of yellow mustard seeds, a teaspoon of turmeric and a few star anise. Heat until almost boiling, then decant into a clean Kilner jar.

The pudding Cauliflower rice pudding. Not. Even. Joking. You blitz the cauliflower quickly, then stir in a pan over a low heat with coconut milk, maple syrup, cinnamon and an egg. The boyfriend's verdict: 'Not nearly as disgusting as I had prepared myself for. May I go now?' Sadly not, because the finale was...

The treat So sue me, it was worth a shot: cauliflower ice cream. Boil it until just soft, then blend it with a cup of melted chocolate, a slug of espresso, a splash of vanilla extract and a drizzle of agave syrup. Pour into ice cream moulds, pop in a lolly stick and freeze. Tasted great, but by this stage my audience had lost the will to live.

Given its controversial reputation, my serving suggestion for the ice cream – or anything else into which you can crowbar this mighty vegetable – is to hide the evidence and just call it cavolfiore (Italian for cauliflower).

Good Food contributing editor Emma Freud is a journalist and broadcaster, and director of Red Nose Day, which is on BBC One on 24 March 2017. [@emmafreud](http://emmafreud)



Surprisingly delicious warm Moroccan cauliflower salad

SERVES 2 PREP 20 mins
COOK 10 mins EASY V

For the salad
1 cauliflower
1 tbsp olive oil
4 spring onions, chopped
1 garlic clove, crushed
1 red chilli, finely chopped
1 tsp ground cumin
1 lemon, zested and juiced
handful pine nuts or chopped hazelnuts, quickly roasted in a dry pan
50g dried cranberries or chopped dried figs
50g chopped parsley
50g chopped mint
50g pomegranate seeds
For the tahini sauce
75g natural yogurt
1 tbsp tahini
1 tsp ground cumin
1 lemon, juiced
1 tsp agave syrup
50g chopped coriander

1 First, make the tahini sauce by mixing all the ingredients together in a small bowl, then set aside.

2 Take the outer leaves off the cauliflower and discard, then cut the cauliflower into rough chunks. Put these in a food processor in two batches and blitz for a few secs until it looks like rice.

3 Heat the oil in a large, non-stick frying pan and gently fry the spring onions, garlic and chilli for a couple of mins. Add the blitzed cauliflower and continue to cook gently for about 5 mins.

4 Add the cumin, lemon zest and juice, toasted nuts and cranberries, and cook gently for a couple of mins. Take off the heat, mix through the pomegranate seeds and herbs, and serve with the tahini sauce on the side.

GOOD TO KNOW calcium • folate • fibre • vit c • iron • 3 of 5-a-day • gluten free
PER SERVING 485 kcals • fat 24g • saturates 3g • carbs 45g • sugars 36g • fibre 11g • protein 17g • salt 0.2g