

Crispy Italian Fried Cauliflower with Marinara

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In Italy, a *fritto misto* platter is the ultimate celebration of golden, crunchy bites – a mix of fried vegetables, seafood, and savory morsels served hot and fresh. This **crispy Italian fried cauliflower** makes a delicious addition to that tradition. The cauliflower is first blanched in salted water for a tender interior, then coated in a light, garlic-and-herb batter and fried until irresistibly crisp. Served with warm marinara sauce for dipping, it's the perfect antipasto to share with friends, or to pair alongside fried zucchini, artichokes, or calamari for your own homemade *fritto misto* experience.

Things to Know About Crispy Italian Fried Cauliflower with Marinara

1. It's inspired by Italian *fritto misto*.

This recipe takes a cue from *fritto misto*, the Italian tradition of serving a variety of lightly battered and fried vegetables or seafood as part of an antipasto platter.

2. Blanching is the secret to perfect texture.

A quick dip in boiling salted water softens the cauliflower just enough so the inside is tender while the outside fries up crisp.

3. Sparkling water makes the batter light.

Using cold sparkling water instead of still water adds tiny air bubbles, creating a delicate, airy crunch.

4. Garlic and herbs give it Italian flair.

The batter is seasoned with garlic powder, paprika, and a pinch of herbs for a subtle Mediterranean flavor that pairs beautifully with marinara.

5. Serve immediately for best results.

Like most fried foods, these are at their crispiest straight from the oil. Arrange them on a warm platter and serve with marinara for dipping.

6. It's perfect for entertaining.

Whether you make it as a stand-alone appetizer or as part of a larger fried platter with zucchini, mushrooms, and calamari, this dish is a crowd-pleaser. For a full Italian-inspired spread, pair it with my Shrimp Oreganata or Spinach Ricotta Balls

Ingredients

Crispy Cauliflower Batter Recipe

Ingredients:

- 1 medium head cauliflower
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/3 cup cornstarch (for extra crispiness)
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika (or regular paprika)

- salt and pepper to taste
- 1 cup cold sparkling water (or more, as needed)
- Optional: pinch of cayenne pepper or chili flakes for heat
- olive oil for frying

Instructions

1. Prep the cauliflower:

Cut 1 medium head of cauliflower into florets. Rinse and pat dry thoroughly.

2. Blanch the cauliflower:

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the cauliflower florets and cook for **2–3 minutes**, just until slightly tender but still firm. Drain well and pat completely dry with paper towels.

3. Make the batter:

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, cornstarch, baking powder, salt, and spices. Slowly add the **cold sparkling water**, whisking until smooth. The batter should be thick enough to coat the florets but still drip slightly – like pancake batter.

4. Coat the florets:

Dip each floret into the batter, letting any excess drip off.

5. Fry or bake:

- **To fry:** Heat the oil to 350°F (175°C). Fry florets in batches for 3–5 minutes, or until golden and crispy. Drain on paper towels.

- **To bake:** Preheat oven to 425°F (220°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment. Place battered

florets on the sheet and spray with oil. Bake for 25–30 minutes, flipping halfway, until golden and crisp.