

# Cauliflower in chili crisp purgatory

© Hetty Lui McKinnon, To Vegetables, With Love 2023

This recipe is inspired by Italian Uova in Purgatorio or *eggs in purgatory*. The dish is similar to shakshuka, with soft eggs simmered in a spicy and robust tomato sauce.

In my recipe, the eggs are replaced by cauliflower, which bathe in a rich tomato bath that is made spicy with chili crisp. It's a rich dish and one that is adaptable according to your spice level. My recipe will give you a medium level heat but add more chili crisp if you want to dial up the spice factor. I tested this recipe using lao gan ma brand chili crisp which is not the spiciest on the market, so bear this in mind when using other brands.

Searing the cauliflower first deepens the flavor and sweetness. Don't be afraid to get it nice and dark.

Eat this alone as a veggie main but I do recommend serving with bread to mop up all the tomatoey sauce. You could also serve with a side of white or brown rice, or couscous.

Serves 4

Extra virgin olive oil

650g / 1.5 pounds (1 small or 1/2 medium) cauliflower, trimmed and cut into 6 wedges

1 brown/yellow onion, halved and finely sliced

4 garlic cloves, finely chopped

3-4 tablespoons chili crisp such as Lao gan ma

800g (28oz) diced tomatoes

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon sugar

bread, to serve (optional)

Heat a large skillet/frying pan on medium high heat. Drizzle with olive oil and, working in batches, add the cauliflower wedges, cut side down, to the pan. Cook for 5 to 6 minutes until deeply golden, and then turn over to cook the other cut side, seasoning with a pinch of sea salt, until golden, another 5 to 6 minutes. Transfer the cauliflower, including any straggly bits, to a plate and set aside.

Return the skillet to medium heat. Add another drizzle of oil, and add the onions, and cook for 3 to 4 minutes until softened. Add the garlic and chili crisp and stir for 30 to 45 seconds. Pour in the tomatoes and the salt and sugar and stir to combine. Cover and cook for 4-5 minutes to allow flavors to meld.

Place the cauliflower wedges into the sauce, cover and simmer on medium low for 10 to 15 minutes, until the cauliflower is tender all the way through (the exact time will depend upon the size of your wedges - test by inserting a skewer).

Top with scallions and more chili oil. Serve as is or with bread to mop up the sauce.