

TO VEGETABLES
with love

Sriracha cauliflower and quinoa salad with tahini ranch

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For this salad, I was inspired by buffalo cauliflower, the sweet and spicy bright crimson bites that are often served at bars as a drink snack. The signature of buffalo sauce is a very specific ingredient - [Frank's hot sauce](#). However, since this is an ingredient I wouldn't use in my daily cooking, I looked for an alternative. I found it in sriracha.

As an accompaniment to food, sriracha is not my favourite type of hot sauce. I prefer less acidic chili oils. But when used in sauces and salad dressings, it absolutely shines. During the recent [Huy Fong Foods sriracha](#) (the only brand!) famine of the past few years, I held onto my half used bottle of sriracha tightly, using it sparingly in my cooking. I was not able to develop sriracha-forward recipes like this one. This week, after finally replenishing my fridge with a brand new bottle, I used the opportunity to cook a buffalo-esque cauliflower salad, with sriracha in place of Frank's hot sauce. I think you'll enjoy the results.

There are several elements involved in this salad. The cauliflower is dredged in batter, then roasted at high heat, then brushed with the sriracha glaze, and then roasted again. While that happens, you are cooking some quinoa and throwing together the tahini ranch dressing. For those who are short on time, or want a lower effort dish, you could skip the batter and simply roast the cauliflower, brushing on the glaze, before giving it a quick final roast. The cauliflower won't be crispy and will lack some of the body of the battered variety, but it will still be good.

The sweetness of the cauliflower is balanced by the tanginess of the "ranch". The tahini ranch is out of this world. It's just delicious and I want to eat it with everything (tahini dressings are my favourite!). If you don't have garlic and onion powder in your pantry and don't wish to purchase it, I would skip it and just add 1 clove of grated garlic. Dill weed is also a dried herb which may not be used often enough to justify buying - I did buy it especially for this recipe, but that is because I wanted to add it to my spice and herb pantry; if you don't, substitute it with another dried herb such as basil or even better, add 1 tablespoon of chopped fresh dill, parsley or scallions.

The rice flour and cornflour (cornstarch) batter delivers a light yet crisp coating. If you want, you could substitute the rice flour with plain (all-purpose) flour – the batter will be heavier but still good.

Serves 4-6

1 medium (about 900g / 2 pounds) cauliflower, cut into florets
extra virgin olive oil
200g (1 cup) quinoa
Sea salt and black pepper
handful salad leaves such as spinach or rocket (arugula)
handful soft herbs such as mint, parsley, coriander (cilantro), scallions

Marinade

1/2 cup (40g) cornflour (cornstarch)
1/2 cup (65g) rice flour
1/2 - 3/4 cup (120 – 180ml) milk of your choice (or water)
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika
sea salt and black pepper

Sriracha glaze

60ml 1/4 cup sriracha or other hot sauce
2 tablespoons maple syrup
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil

Tahini ranch

1/4 cup tahini
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder (see headnote)
1/2 teaspoon onion powder (see headnote)
1 teaspoon dill weed (optional) (see headnote)
2 tablespoons nutritional yeast (see headnote)
Juice of 1/2 lime or lemon

In a large mixing bowl, add the cornflour (cornstarch), rice flour, garlic powder, smoked paprika, 1 teaspoon of salt and season with black pepper. Add 1/2 cup of milk (or water) to start with and whisk to combine. Check consistency, it should be thick enough to coat the cauliflower but not chunky. Add another 2-3 tablespoons more of milk or water until you get the right consistency. Leave to rest for 5-10 minutes to thicken up further.

Preheat oven to 450°F / 230°C. Line a baking sheet with baking paper and drizzle with olive oil.

Add the cauliflower to the batter and toss well until thoroughly coated. Remove the cauliflower from the batter, tapping off the excess batter a few times on the side of the bowl, and arrange them onto the lined baking sheet. Drizzle with olive oil. Bake until it is lightly golden, 20-22 minutes.

Meanwhile, place the quinoa, along with 2 cups water and 1 teaspoon of salt into a medium pot. Bring to the boil, reduce heat to medium-low, cover and cook until the quinoa is translucent and tender, and the liquid has been absorbed, about 15 minutes. Allow the quinoa to cool in the pan for 5-10 minutes, to allow the quinoa to dry out.

In a small bowl, combine the sriracha or hot sauce, maple syrup and olive oil.

Remove the cauliflower from the oven. Very carefully, flip the cauliflower (don't worry if some parts stick to the foil). Brush the cauliflower with the hot sauce mix and return to the oven for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, combine the tahini, garlic powder, onion powder, dill weed, nutritional yeast and lime or lemon juice in a small bowl. Add 3 tablespoons of water and whisk until the tahini is smooth and pourable. If it is too thick, add another tablespoon or 2 of water until it's the right consistency.

To serve, add the quinoa to a bowl, along with the cauliflower, salad leaves and herbs. Drizzle over the tahini ranch, season with sea salt and black pepper and toss well to combine. To serve, drizzle with a little olive oil.