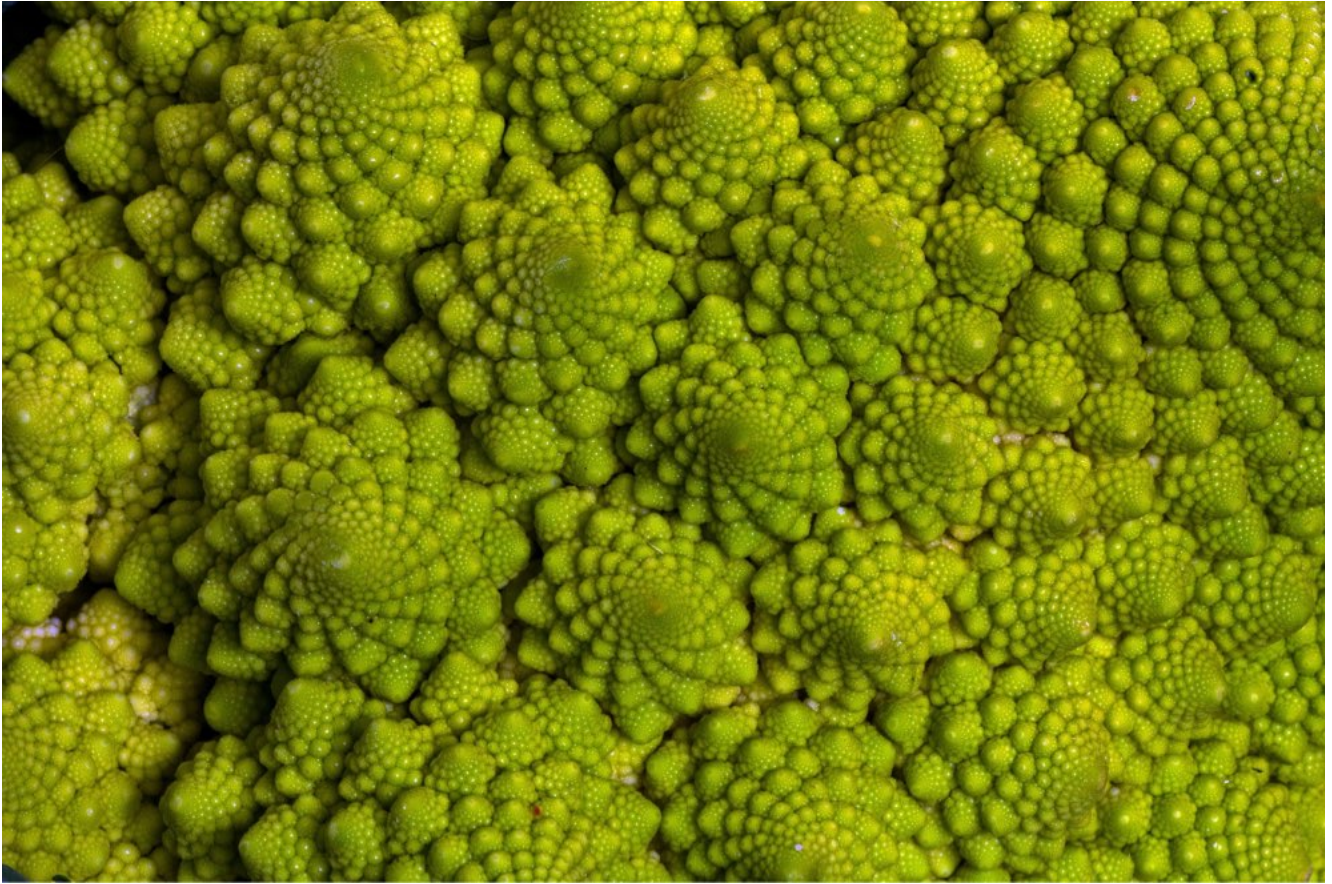

Romanesco 101

Cauliflower goes fractal.





A member of the cauliflower family, Romanesco is lime-green with tight spiraller architectural formations. It is sometimes called “Romanesco Broccoli” due to the similarity to its green cousin.

How to Store:

When choosing Romanesco, look for tight green florets with no browning. Wrap unwashed loosely in a plastic bag and keep it in the crisper drawer of your refrigerator. It keeps for over a week but is firmest and tastiest if used within a few days.

Handling:

All parts of the Romanesco plant are edible: leaves, stem, and florets. Do not wash the vegetable until you are ready to eat it.

First, strip the stalks of leaves. The leaves can be prepared like collards or kale. Cut out the bottom stem using a paring knife. Reserve the stem for eating! (Stock, stews, grated for slaw). Break the head into florets of desired size. Then use a peeler or paring knife to cut the tough skin off the stalk, and cut into equal size pieces for even cooking. The stalks will require a few extra minutes of cooking time.

Substitutes:

Cauliflower, broccoflower, broccoli, or broccoli raab.

Best Uses:

Salads

Soups and stews

Add to casseroles

Pasta Dishes

Quiche/Frittata

Pizza topping

Stir Fry

Steamed with butter & salt

Roasted or grilled

Raw on a vegetable platter

Saute with garlic & Parmesan

Cauliflower rice

5 Ways to Cook Romanesco:

How do you know when your Romanesco is done? It depends on your taste. Some people like it bright green with a bit of crispiness. Some people like it cooked a few minutes longer until tender. If you cook it too long, it can be so mushy it will fall apart. As a general rule, cook until you can pierce the stem with a sharp knife.

Cooking Method #1 Roasting

Heat the oven to 400°F. Toss the florets and stems with a few teaspoons of oil and 1/2 teaspoon of salt. Spread on a foil-lined baking sheet in a single layer. Roast for 30 minutes, until slightly crunchy.

Cooking Method #2: Steaming in the Microwave

Place the florets and stems in a microwave-safe dish and pour 2 to 3 tablespoons of water over top. Cover with a dinner plate and microwave on HIGH for 3 to 4 minutes. Remove the lid carefully and check if the Romanesco is tender. Microwave in additional 1-minute bursts if necessary.

Cooking Method #3: Steaming on the Stovetop

Fill pot with a few inches of water and insert a steamer basket over top. Bring the water to a simmer over medium-high heat. Add the florets and cover. Steam for 4 to 5 minutes, until tender.



Cooking Method #4 - Sautéing

Drizzle a skillet with oil and set over high to medium-high heat. Add the florets and a big pinch of salt. Toss to coat with oil. Add a garlic clove, minced and cook for 1 minute. Cook for 5 minutes until slightly tender. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.

Cooking Method #5: Blanching

Prepare a bowl of ice water and have it next to the stove. Bring a large pot of water to a rapid boil. Add a heaping tablespoon of salt. Add the florets and cook until crisp-tender, 1 to 2 minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon and plunge immediately in the ice water.

How to Freeze Romanesco:

Both stems and florets can be frozen. But blanching is a necessary step to preserve the color and flavor. Use frozen Romanesco within a year.

Split sections into florets that are no bigger than 1.5 inches across. Remove the thicker stems, but save them; you can also freeze these for use in soups and stews. Blanch in boiling water for three minutes or steam for five minutes. Remove the florets quickly after cooking and dunk in ice water for 3 minutes. Package in freezer bags in portion-size amounts.

Suggested Recipes:

Romanesco Fried Rice

Adapted from CookingLight.com; Serves 4

Cauliflower rice is a great exit strategy for this vegetable!

Ingredients:

- 2 heads romanesco, roughly chopped
- 2 tablespoons canola oil, divided
- 1 (14-oz) package extra firm tofu, drained and cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons minced shallots
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 cups sugar snap peas
- 1/2 cup grated carrot
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 tablespoons reduced sodium soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced green onion, plus more for garnish
- 2 teaspoons sesame seeds

Directions:

Place half of Romanesco in a food processor. Pulse until Romanesco resembles granules of rice. Repeat with remaining batch. Set aside.

Heat 1 tablespoon canola oil in a large skillet or wok over medium-high heat. Add tofu to pan and season with salt and pepper. Cook for 3 to 4 minutes; flip and cook 1 to 2 minutes longer. Reduce heat to medium and add remaining 1 Tablespoon canola oil. Add shallots, garlic, snap peas, and carrots; cook 2 to 3 minutes. Add green onion; cook 1 minute.

Clear an open spot in the center of pan. Add eggs, stirring occasionally to lightly scramble. Before egg is completely set, stir in Romanesco. Drizzle with soy sauce and sesame oil. Cook 1 minute or until thoroughly heated. Top with toasted sesame seeds and additional green onion, if desired.

Baked Romanesco with Mozzarella and Olives

Adapted from the NYTimes.com

Ingredients:

Salt and pepper

2 or 3 medium heads romanesco (about 3 pounds)

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for baking dish

1 pound fresh mozzarella, sliced

1 cup grated pecorino or Parmesan (about 2 ounces)

1 dozen soft black oil-cured olives, or another type of black olive, pitted

1 teaspoon roughly chopped capers

4 roughly chopped anchovy fillets

4 garlic cloves, minced

½ teaspoon crushed red pepper, or to taste

Pinch of dried oregano

Directions:

Put a large pot of well-salted water over high heat and bring to a boil. Heat oven to 375 degrees.

Cut Romanesco into quarters and trim away the core and any tough bits. Chop quarters into rough 2-inch cubes. Transfer to boiling water and cook for 2 minutes. Drain and rinse with cool water.

Lightly oil a baking dish. Arrange blanched Romanesco in one layer. Season lightly with salt and pepper.

Tear mozzarella slices and scatter over the top, then sprinkle with pecorino. Arrange olives here and there. In a small bowl, stir together capers, anchovy, garlic, red pepper and 3 tablespoons olive oil. Drizzle mixture evenly over the top.

Bake for about 30 minutes, until cheese has browned a bit and Romanesco is tender when pierced with a fork. Let rest 10 to 15 minutes before serving. Sprinkle with a good pinch of dried oregano.

Pasta with Roasted Romanesco & Capers

Adapted from epicurious.com

Ingredients:

1/4 cup chopped almonds
1/4 cup plus 3 tablespoons olive oil; plus more for drizzling
2 tablespoons drained capers, patted dry, divided
Kosher salt
1/2 medium Romanesco or cauliflower, cored, cut into small florets
8 garlic cloves, very thinly sliced
1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes, plus more for serving
1/2 cup dry white wine
12 ounces medium shell pasta
2 ounces aged Asiago cheese or Pecorino, finely grated
2 tablespoons unsalted butter

Directions:

Preheat oven to 425°F. Cook almonds, 1/4 cup oil, and 1 Tbsp. capers in a small saucepan over medium-low heat, swirling pan occasionally, until capers burst and almonds are golden brown and smell toasty, about 5 minutes. Transfer almonds and capers with a slotted spoon to a small bowl; season with salt. Let cool. Toss Romanesco with oil from saucepan on a rimmed baking sheet; season with salt. Roast, tossing halfway through, until golden brown and tender, 20–25 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat 3 Tbsp. oil in a large Dutch oven or other heavy pot over medium-high. Add garlic, 1/2 tsp. red pepper flakes, and remaining 1 Tbsp. capers and cook, stirring often, until garlic is golden, about 3 minutes. Add wine and cook until liquid is almost completely evaporated, about 2 minutes.

Cook pasta in a large pot of boiling salted water, stirring occasionally, until very al dente, about 3 minutes less than package directions.

Using a spider or a slotted spoon, transfer pasta to pot with garlic; add 1 cup pasta cooking liquid. Reduce heat to medium and cook, tossing often, until pasta is al dente and liquid is slightly thickened, about 3 minutes. Add 1/4 cup pasta cooking liquid, then gradually add cheese, tossing until melted and dissolved into a luxurious, glossy sauce. Remove from heat; add butter and toss to combine. Toss in Romanesco. Divide pasta among bowls. Top with fried almonds and capers and more red pepper flakes and drizzle with oil.

Roasted Romanesco Soup with Prosciutto

Adapted from BeyondSweetandSavory.com

Ingredients:

2 heads of Romanesco, cut into florets, washed and rinsed
1 small onion, chopped
3 T olive oil
2 cups of chicken stock
1/2 cup of heavy cream
1 tbsp of sugar
4 pieces of prosciutto
Salt and pepper to taste
Romanesco florets for garnish

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Place the Romanesco florets in a roasting tray, drizzle with 2 T. of olive oil, and roast for 30 minutes.

Place the prosciutto in a separate roasting pan and roast for 10-15 minutes, or until crispy. Heat the remaining olive oil in a large saucepan. Add the chopped onions and saute at medium heat until soft and golden, about 10 minutes.

Add the Romanesco and chicken stock and cook until tender about 15-20 minutes.

Place the Romanesco mixture in a food processor and process until smooth.

Return the Romanesco puree to the saucepan, stir in the cream, and simmer for another 5 minutes. Add sugar and salt to taste.

When ready to serve, ladle the soup into bowls, add prosciutto and pepper. Garnish with a few Romanesco florets.

Roasted Romanesco, Beet, Butternut Quinoa Salad with Vinaigrette

Adapted from Recetas Coquetas

Ingredients:

1 small Romanesco

100 ml. red quinoa

250 gram butternut squash

250 gram beets

1 pear

olive oil

pomegranate seeds

almonds

Vinaigrette:

juice of half a lemon

1 T. mustard

1 T. honey

2 T. olive oil

salt and pepper

Directions:

Wash and cook the quinoa in 200 ml. water for 15 minutes.

Cut the squash, beetroot and pear in bite size pieces and add a bit of oil and salt. Put them in the preheated oven at 375 F. Do not mix the vegetables (to keep the beets from discoloring everything). Keep them in the oven for about 25 minutes.

Prepare the vinaigrette: just mix all the ingredients and whisk them a bit.

Wash and cut the Romanesco in small bunches and cook it briefly in salted water for 3 minutes. You want them to be a bit crunchy.

Arrange all the ingredients on the serving plate. Serve with the vinaigrette and enjoy!

Mashed Romanesco Cauliflower with Cheese

Adapted from Mark Bittman

Ingredients:

Salt

1 large head Romanesco or cauliflower, cored, trimmed, and separated into florets

1 cup milk or cream, plus more as needed

2 tablespoons butter

2 cups grated white melting cheese, like cheddar, Asiago or Gruyere

Freshly ground black pepper

1/4 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

Chopped parsley leaves for garnish

Directions:

Fill a large pot with water, put it on to boil, and salt it. Boil the cauliflower until very tender, about 15 minutes. Drain, reserving about a cup of the cooking water. Wipe the pot dry.

Put the milk, butter, and cheese in the pot over medium-low heat. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and the nutmeg. Cook, stirring occasionally to keep the mixture from sticking, until the cheese and butter start to melt, 3 to 5 minutes.

Stir in the cauliflower and mash with a fork or potato masher; stir well to combine. The mixture should be the consistency you like in mashed potatoes. If its not creamy enough, add a little of the cauliflower cooking water or more milk or cream until it is.

Taste and adjust the seasoning, garnish and serve.

Roasted Romanesco with Brown Butter Toasted Panko

Adapted from BrooklynSupper.com

Ingredients:

1 head Romanesco (cauliflower with work well, too), cored and cut into 3/4-inch florets

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

sea salt

freshly ground pepper

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

1/2 cup panko breadcrumbs

1 teaspoon finely minced garlic

1/4 cup finely minced parsley

Directions:

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. Move a rack to the top third of oven.

Toss Romanesco florets with olive oil, and a generous pinch each sea salt and pepper. Scatter on 1 - 2 baking sheets, making sure each floret has an inch or two of space. Slide into oven and roast 15 minutes. Remove from oven, carefully flip each floret, and roast an additional 10 - 15 minutes, or until edges are a deep golden brown and florets are fork tender.

Meanwhile, heat a small skillet over medium heat. Add butter and swirl to melt. Cook butter gently – edge heat to medium-low if needed – swirling or stirring, until butter goes from golden to light brown and takes on a nutty fragrance, 5 - 7 minutes. Toss in panko and garlic, and a pinch each sea salt and pepper. Toast panko, stirring often, 2 - 3 minutes or until golden. Remove from heat and fold in parsley.

Arrange roasted Romanesco on a platter, top with warm breadcrumbs, and serve immediately.

Steamed Romanesco with Cheese Sauce

Ingredients:

1 Romanesco head, cut into medium florets

1 tablespoon butter

1 level tablespoon flour

1/2 teaspoon ground mustard

pinch nutmeg

3/4 to 1 cup milk or half-and-half

1 cup Cheddar cheese or a Cheddar Jack blend

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

panko bread crumbs

Directions:

Bring a saucepan filled with an inch of water to a boil. Place florets in steamer basket over the boiling water and cover. Steam for 5 minutes. Remove from heat.

Melt the butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Add the flour, ground mustard, and nutmeg and cook, whisking or stirring constantly, for about 1 1/2 to 2 minutes.

Gradually whisk in 3/4 cup of the milk or half-and-half and continue cooking, stirring constantly, until thickened.

Stir in the shredded cheese and continue cooking, stirring, until the cheese has melted.

Thin the sauce with a tablespoon or two of milk, if desired.

Add salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste.

Makes 1 1/4 cups of sauce.

Drizzle cheese sauce over steamed cauliflower. Top with panko bread crumbs.