

Zahra (fried cauliflower):

This is a very yummy Lebanese dish that I used to eat at Omar Khyam's in Seattle. I figured it out with much help from a Lebanese former colleague at Northwest Airlines, Jim Ead. Usually served as a hearty appetizer

The sauce (prepare first):

2 cloves of garlic

1 tsp salt

juice of one lemon (or lime, use only fresh squeezed juice)

1 cup of tahini (sesame seed paste, most stores carry it these days)

1 cup of plain yogurt

1 Tbsp paprika

A little hot red pepper sauce to taste (I use Sriracha sauce. Tabasco or a little cayenne would work)

Water as required

Crush the garlic into a mortar and pestle. Put salt over crushed garlic. Grind in the mortar and pestle until a smooth paste (takes a minute at most). Pour lemon juice over the garlic and salt and mix. Pour this mixture into a larger mixing bowl (I use one about 2 quarts volume). Pour tahini in and mix well. The mixture will thicken rapidly. Add yogurt, red pepper sauce, and paprika and blend well. Add water very gradually (a little goes a long way) until the sauce is the consistency of thick pancake batter. It should flow over the cauliflower; but cling well too.

Cut one head of cauliflower into large florettes. Steam for 6 minutes. While steaming, heat a large frying pan with about 1/2 cup of canola oil to medium heat. Remove cauliflower from the steamer immediately and place in the hot frying pan. Fry over medium heat for about 10 to 15 minutes, turning frequently with tongs until most of the surface of the florettes is covered with golden-brown fried color.

Place cauliflower hot from the pan in a large bowl and pour a generous amount of the sauce over it. Serve immediately.

(You will likely have left over sauce. This a good thing: it's great for dipping bread or crackers.)