

## Cauliflower Gratin with Nutmeg

serves 6

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### For the cauliflower

1 large cauliflower (about 2 1/2 lbs) – florets trimmed from stalk and cut in 2" pieces  
3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes  
3 large shallots – peeled, halved and finely sliced  
4 large garlic cloves – skinned and finely chopped  
3/4 cup white wine  
1/2 teaspoon sea salt  
freshly ground black pepper to taste

### For the béchamel

4 tablespoons unsalted butter  
1/4 cup unbleached white flour  
2 1/2 cup milk  
1/4 teaspoon sea salt  
freshly ground black pepper to taste  
freshly ground nutmeg to taste (use microplane grater)  
4 oz aged Gruyère – coarsely grated  
1 medium oval or rectangular ceramic or glass baking dish; or 6–1/2 cup capacity ramequins – lightly buttered

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Pre-heat oven to 425°F.

**Step 1:** Heat a large heavy-bottomed skillet over medium-high heat. Add the olive oil, red pepper flakes and shallots and sauté for 2 minutes until the shallots start to soften but not brown. Add the cauliflower and garlic, toss well and sauté for 2 additional minutes until warmed through, tossing only a couple of times. Add the wine and toss well. Then add salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste, toss again. Reduce heat to medium-low and cover pan. Braise cauliflower for 8 to 10 minutes until tender. Uncover pan and sauté at high heat for 1 to 2 minutes until all juices have evaporated. Transfer to the prepared baking pan.

**Step 2:** In a medium heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium-high heat, melt the butter. Whisk in the flour and cook, whisking constantly for 1 to 2 minutes until the mixture becomes foamy and the flour becomes golden, but not brown. Quickly add the milk and whisk constantly until the mixture is well blended. When the mixture starts bubbling, lower heat and slow simmer for 6 to 8 minutes until the béchamel has thickened. Add the salt, pepper and nutmeg. Mix well and remove from heat.

**Step 3:** Pour the béchamel over the cauliflower and sprinkle with the cheese. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes until top is golden-brown. Remove from oven and let cool for 5 to 10 minutes before serving.

***Cook's note:** The gratin can be baked, cooled and refrigerated up to 1 day or frozen up to 3 weeks. To serve, bring to room temperature and bake at 425°F for 8 to 10 minutes until hot.*