

Fried Cauliflower with Za'atar Yogurt Dipping Sauce

Cauliflower haters, pay attention. We know. This snowy head of bland crunchy stuff is low on your list. Too many plates of cauliflower derived “mashed potatoes” or pretend pizza crusts have passed your way. But listen: if you like anything fried, this dish is worth the experiment. A quick battered fry in hot oil, sprinkled with salt immediately after, and then dipped in an incredibly flavorful yogurt sauce should be enough to bring you to the other side. And if you're already a fan ... wait, where did you go? Ah, you're already heating the oil. Good move.

Ingredients

6 to 8 cups vegetable oil, or enough to fill your pot to a depth of 2 inches
1 cup full-fat Greek yogurt
3 tablespoons water
1 1/2 teaspoons za'atar spice mix
3/4 teaspoon sugar
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more for sprinkling
1/4 cup fresh mint leaves, finely chopped
1 to 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon
1/2 cup self-rising flour
1 teaspoon turmeric
2/3 cup light-bodied beer
1 head cauliflower (2 1/4 pounds), cut into small florets

Special equipment: deep-fry thermometer

Directions

Set a baking rack into a rimmed baking sheet and place by the stove. Clip a deep-fry thermometer to the side of a Dutch oven. Pour in the oil and turn the heat to medium-high. Bring the oil up to 360 degrees, about 15-20 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a small bowl, mix the yogurt, water, za'atar spice mix, sugar, salt, mint and lemon juice together. Taste, and adjust salt as needed.

Whisk the flour and turmeric together, and then whisk in the beer.

Once the oil has come to temperature, working in batches, roll 6 to 8 florets around in the batter with tongs. Let any excess drip off and carefully slip the florets into the oil. Fry, turning with a slotted spoon or metal spider, until all sides are nicely browned, about 2 minutes. Remove with

the slotted spoon to the baking sheet and sprinkle immediately with some salt. Allow the oil to come back up to temperature, and fry another batch of florets.

Serve hot with the yogurt dipping sauce.

Cook's Notes: You can make your own za'atar spice quite easily. It just requires a trip to the Indian grocery store — always a fun excursion — or a hop online. Stir together equal parts sumac, dried thyme and sesame seeds. You could also roast the sesame seeds or buy already roasted ones in a Korean market. Stir in 1 teaspoon salt. This makes more than you need for the yogurt sauce, but you'll be sprinkling it on everything, and it will keep for a couple of weeks in a sealed container.

total time: 40 minutes

active prep: 40 minutes

serves: 2 to 4

difficulty: moderate