

CAULIFLOWER-CHEESE SOUP WITH BACON AND WINE Serves 4-6

For a vegetarian version: 1. Skip the bacon and begin with 2 tablespoons olive oil for cooking the vegetables 2. use vegetable broth in place of the chicken broth.

For a vegan version: Follow 1 and 2 above plus 3. Sub rice or almond milk for the (dairy) milk and 4. Skip the cheese. Blend the soup briefly instead of totally pureeing it. Garnish with only the green onions, though some crunchy garlicky croutons might be perfect, too. (Vegan changes are notes in green parentheses.)

- Olive oil
- 4 slices thick-cut bacon cut into 1/2-inch pieces (Omit and use 2 tablespoons olive oil)
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 stalks celery, sliced thinly
- 2 carrots, peeled and sliced thinly
- Handful fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 medium potato, peeled and diced
- 1/4 teaspoon turmeric (Can sub curry powder.)
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon fresh ground black pepper
- Pinch crushed red pepper
- 1 cup white wine
- 1 cup water
- 1 quart low sodium chicken broth (Vegetable broth)
- 1 pound cauliflower florets
- 1 cups milk or half-and-half or cream (Rice or Almond milk)
- 1/2 pound (8 ounces) grated sharp cheddar* (Omit.)
- 4 scallions (green onions) minced for garnish

To a heavy 6-quart soup pot, add a tablespoon of olive oil and heat over medium flame. Add chopped bacon and cook until crisp. Remove to towel to drain; reserve. Cook onion, garlic, celery, carrot, parsley, potato, turmeric, salt, pepper, crushed red pepper in the bacon grease until vegetables are tender -- about 10 minutes. Pour in wine and cook another few minutes until the wine is reduced and incorporated. Pour in water and broth; bring to a boil.

Add cauliflower, reduce heat to simmer, cover, and cook until cauliflower is very tender-but not mushy-perhaps 10 minutes. Add milk and let heat another minute or two until warm; do not boil. Purée in the pot using an immersion blender or carefully in batches in a food processor. (Alternately, purée just half of the soup if you like a more chunky soup.) Return to pot, if you used the food processor, and heat through until quite warm. Taste and adjust seasonings; do not add salt as the cheese is salty. Add cheese, leaving on heat until just melted. Do not boil. Taste again and adjust seasonings if needed. Serve hot garnished with scallions and bacon. **Buy the best Cheddar you can find--aged and white, if at all possible.*