Prep time: 15 minutes
Cook time: 35 minutes
Total time: 50 minutes
Servings: 6

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Introduction

If you are looking for the ultimate comfort food that doesn’t weigh you down, look no further. This Cheesy Ground Beef and Cauliflower Casserole combines the savory satisfaction of a classic beef dish with the light, nutritious crunch of cauliflower.

By swapping out traditional pasta or potatoes for riced cauliflower, we cut down on carbs

without sacrificing flavor. The secret to this dish is the creamy, garlicky sauce that binds the tender beef and cauliflower together, all topped with a generous blanket of bubbly, golden-brown cheese. It is a one-pan wonder (well, one baking dish!) that your whole family will devour.

Ingredients

For the Casserole:

- 1 large head of cauliflower (about 2 lbs), cut into small florets (or 5 cups of store-bought cauliflower rice)
- 1 lb (450g) ground beef (80/20 blend recommended for flavor)
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- ½ tsp salt (plus more for boiling water)

- ½ tsp black pepper
- 1 cup heavy cream (or half-and-half)
- 4 oz cream cheese, softened and cubed
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1 ½ cups sharp cheddar cheese, shredded and divided
- ½ cup mozzarella cheese, shredded
- Fresh parsley, chopped (for garnish)

Instructions

Step 1: Prepare the Cauliflower

Time: 5 minutes | Intensity: Low
Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the cauliflower florets and cook for 4–5 minutes until slightly tender but still firm (al dente). Do not overcook, or the casserole will become mushy. Drain the cauliflower well and set aside. *Note: If using cauliflower rice, you can skip the boiling and simply sauté it in a pan for 3 minutes to remove excess moisture.*

Step 2: Brown the Beef

Time: 8 minutes | Intensity: Medium
While the cauliflower cooks, heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the ground beef and diced onion. Cook, breaking the meat apart with a wooden spoon, until the beef is browned and the onions are translucent (about 6–8 minutes). Drain any excess grease if necessary, though leaving a little adds flavor.

Step 3: Build the Flavor Base

Time: 2 minutes | Intensity: Medium
Add the minced garlic, smoked paprika, dried oregano, salt, and black pepper to the skillet. Stir constantly and cook for 1 minute until fragrant. Be careful not to burn the garlic.

Step 4: Create the Creamy Sauce

Time: 5 minutes | Intensity: Low
Reduce the heat to medium-low. Pour in the heavy cream and add the cubed cream cheese and Dijon mustard. Stir gently until the cream cheese melts completely and the sauce thickens slightly. Stir in ½ cup of the shredded cheddar cheese until melted. Turn off the heat.

Step 5: Combine and Assemble

Time: 5 minutes | Intensity: Low
Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C). Add the drained cauliflower to the skillet with the beef and sauce. Gently fold everything together until the cauliflower is evenly coated. Transfer the mixture into a 9×13-inch baking dish.

Step 6: The Cheese Topping

Time: 2 minutes | Intensity: Low
In a small bowl, mix the remaining 1 cup of cheddar cheese with the mozzarella cheese.

Sprinkle this mixture evenly over the top of the casserole.

Step 7: Bake

Time: 15–20 minutes | Intensity: Medium
Place the dish in the preheated oven and bake for 15–20 minutes, or until the cheese is melted, bubbly, and starting to turn golden brown on top.

Step 8: Rest and Serve

Time: 5 minutes | Intensity: Low
Remove from the oven and let the casserole rest for 5 minutes. This allows the juices to settle and makes serving easier. Garnish with fresh chopped parsley and serve hot.

Recipe Notes & Tips

- Texture Check: The key to a good cauliflower casserole is ensuring the cauliflower is dry. After boiling, let it sit in a colander for a few minutes to steam off excess water.
- Spice It Up: If you like heat, add a pinch of red pepper flakes or a diced jalapeño when you cook the onions.
- Make Ahead: You can assemble this casserole up to 24 hours in advance. Cover and refrigerate. When ready to bake, add 10 minutes to the baking time.
- Storage: Store leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 4 days. Reheat in the microwave or oven.

Nutrition Information (Estimated)

Disclaimer: Nutritional values are estimates and will vary based on specific ingredients used.

Serving Size: 1/6 of recipe
Calories: 480
Total Fat: 36g
Saturated Fat: 19g
Trans Fat: 0.5g
Cholesterol: 135mg
Sodium: 620mg
Total Carbohydrate: 9g
Dietary Fiber: 3g
Total Sugars: 4g
Protein: 28g