

- Prep Time: 15 minutes
- Cook Time: 15 minutes
- Total Time: 30 minutes
- Difficulty Level: Easy
- Air Fryer Temperature Intensity: High (390°F / 200°C)
- Yield: 4 servings

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Ingredients

For the Cauliflower & Dredge

- 1 large head fresh cauliflower (approx. 1.5 lbs), broken into bite-sized florets
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup all-purpose flour (or gluten-free 1:1 baking flour)
- 2 large eggs (beaten)
- 2 tablespoons milk or unsweetened plant-based milk
- 1 cup Panko breadcrumbs (for maximum crunch)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese (optional, for extra savory flavor)

Spice Blend

- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried oregano

- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt (or to taste)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon freshly cracked black pepper
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon cayenne pepper (optional, for a light kick)

For Cooking & Serving

- Olive oil spray or avocado oil spray (high smoke point)
- Fresh parsley, chopped (for garnish)
- Dipping sauces: Garlic aioli, ranch, spicy mayo, or marinara

Step-by-Step Instructions

Step 1: Prep the Cauliflower

1. Wash the head of cauliflower thoroughly under cool running water and pat it completely dry with a clean kitchen towel. Excess moisture prevents the breadcrumbs from sticking properly and makes the cauliflower steam rather than crisp.
2. Cut the cauliflower into uniform, bite-sized florets (about 1 to 1.5 inches each). Keeping them similar in size ensures even cooking in the air fryer.

Step 2: Set Up the Dredging Station

Set up three shallow bowls in an assembly line:

- Bowl 1 (Flour & Spices): Whisk together the flour, garlic powder, onion powder, smoked paprika, dried oregano, salt, black pepper, and cayenne pepper.
- Bowl 2 (Egg Wash): Beat the eggs together with the milk until smooth and combined.
- Bowl 3 (Breadcrumbs): Mix the Panko breadcrumbs with grated Parmesan cheese (if using).

Step 3: Bread the Florets

1. Take a handful of cauliflower florets and toss them in Bowl 1 until evenly coated in the spiced flour mixture. Shake off any excess flour.
2. Dip the floured florets into Bowl 2 (egg wash), ensuring every nook and cranny is coated. Allow excess egg to drip off.
3. Transfer the florets to Bowl 3 (panko mixture). Press the breadcrumbs firmly onto the cauliflower so they adhere well.
4. Place the breaded florets on a clean plate or parchment paper while you coat the rest.

Step 4: Air Fry to Crispy Perfection

1. Preheat: Preheat your air fryer to 390°F (200°C) for 3 to 5 minutes.
2. Arrange: Lightly spray the air fryer basket with cooking oil spray. Arrange the breaded cauliflower in a single layer, ensuring the florets are not touching or overlapping. *Work in batches if your air fryer basket is small.*
3. Oil mist: Generously mist the tops of the cauliflower with oil spray. This step is essential for achieving a deep golden color and a light, crispy texture without frying in oil.
4. Air Fry: Cook at 390°F (200°C) for 12 to 15 minutes.
5. Flip: At the 7-to-8-minute mark, pull the basket out and shake or turn the florets using tongs. Lightly spray any dry flour/breadcrumb spots with oil, then return to cook until deeply golden and tender on the inside when pierced with a fork.

Step 5: Garnish and Serve

Transfer the hot, crispy cauliflower to a serving dish. Sprinkle with fresh chopped parsley and serve immediately alongside your favorite dipping sauce, such as garlic aioli, ranch dressing, or sriracha mayo.

Chef's Tips for Success

- Don't Overcrowd the Basket: Air fryers rely on rapid air circulation to make food crispy. If the basket is too full, the cauliflower will steam instead of becoming crunchy. Cook in

batches if necessary.

- **Use Panko Breadcrumbs:** Standard breadcrumbs will work, but Panko breadcrumbs have a larger surface area and flaky structure that yields a significantly crispier crust.
- **Make it Vegan:** Replace the eggs with a slurry made from $\frac{1}{3}$ cup plant-based milk mixed with 2 tablespoons of flour or cornstarch, and swap the Parmesan for nutritional yeast.
- **Gluten-Free Option:** Use a 1:1 gluten-free flour blend and gluten-free panko breadcrumbs.

Nutritional Information

(Estimated values per serving, based on 4 total servings)

Nutrient	Amount per Serving
Calories	185 kcal
Total Fat	5 g
<i>Saturated Fat</i>	1.5 g
<i>Trans Fat</i>	0 g
Cholesterol	85 mg
Sodium	420 mg
Total Carbohydrate	27 g
<i>Dietary Fiber</i>	4 g
<i>Total Sugars</i>	3 g
Protein	9 g
Vitamin C	~70% DV
Calcium	~90 mg
Iron	~2.2 mg

