- Prep time: 10 minutes
- Cook time: 25–30 minutes
- Total time: 35–40 minutes
- Yield: 6 servings
- Category: Soup, Dinner, Low-Carb/Keto
- Cuisine: American

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Ingredients

- 6 slices thick-cut bacon, chopped
- 1 tbsp bacon fat or butter (reserved from cooking)
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 6 cups cauliflower florets (about 1 large head, 2 lbs / 900 g)
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 tsp salt (adjust to taste)
- ½ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- ½ tsp dried thyme
- ¼ tsp smoked paprika (optional, for depth)
- 4 oz (115 g) cream cheese, softened and cubed
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream

- 1½ cups (170 g) sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh chives or green onions, for garnish
- Optional toppings: extra crispy bacon, extra cheddar, a dollop of sour cream

Equipment

- Large Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot
- Wooden spoon or spatula
- Immersion blender (or stand blender, working in batches)
- Ladle
- Cutting board and knife

Instructions

Phase 1: Crisping the Bacon (Intensity: Medium | Time: 6–8

minutes)

1. Cook the Bacon: Place your Dutch oven over medium heat and add the chopped bacon. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 6–8 minutes, until the bacon is crispy and the fat has rendered out. Intensity: Medium — stay nearby and stir every couple of minutes so the bacon browns evenly without burning.

2. Reserve the Fat: Using a slotted spoon, transfer the crispy bacon to a paper-towel-lined plate. Pour off all but about 1 tablespoon of the bacon fat, reserving the rest in case you need it later. Do not wipe out the pot — the browned bits left behind are pure flavor.

Phase 2: Building the Base (Intensity: Medium | Time: 5 minutes)

3. Sauté the Onion: Add the diced onion to the pot with the reserved bacon fat and cook over medium heat for 3–4 minutes, until softened and translucent, scraping up the browned bits from the bottom as you stir.

4. Add the Garlic: Stir in the minced garlic and cook for 1 minute more, until fragrant. Be careful not to let it brown — burnt garlic turns bitter and will ruin the soup.

5. Season: Add the salt, black pepper, dried thyme, and smoked paprika (if using), stirring to coat the onions and garlic.

Phase 3: Simmering the Cauliflower (Intensity: Low | Time: 12–15

minutes)

6. Add the Cauliflower and Broth: Add the cauliflower florets and chicken broth to the pot. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, then reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 12–15 minutes, until the cauliflower is completely fork-tender. Intensity: Low — this is the hands-off phase; let the pot do the work. A fully tender cauliflower is essential for a smooth, potato-like texture.

7. Reserve Some Texture (Optional): If you like a bit of chunkiness in your soup, use a slotted spoon to remove about 1 cup of the cooked cauliflower florets and set them aside before blending.

Phase 4: Blending and Enriching (Intensity: Medium | Time: 5–7 minutes)

8. Blend the Soup: Remove the pot from the heat. Using an immersion blender, blend the soup directly in the pot until completely smooth and velvety — about 2 minutes. If using a stand blender, work in batches, filling it only halfway and venting the lid to prevent steam explosions. Intensity: Medium — keep the blender moving and blend thoroughly; any lumps will stand out in the final soup.

9. Add the Cream Cheese: Return the pot to low heat. Add the cubed cream cheese and stir continuously for 2–3 minutes, until it melts completely and disappears into the soup. Intensity: Medium — keep stirring; cream cheese can scorch if left sitting on the bottom of the pot.

10. Add the Cream and Cheddar: Stir in the heavy cream, then add the shredded cheddar a handful at a time, stirring until each addition melts before adding the next. Cook for 2

minutes more, stirring constantly, until the soup is hot, creamy, and glossy. Do not let it boil after the dairy is added — boiling can cause the cream to curdle.

Phase 5: Finishing and Serving (Intensity: Low | Time: 3 minutes)

11. Taste and Adjust: Taste the soup and adjust the salt and pepper — the amount of salt needed will depend on the saltiness of your bacon and broth. If you reserved cauliflower florets, stir them back in now for texture.

12. Garnish and Serve: Ladle the soup into bowls and top with the crispy bacon, extra shredded cheddar, a dollop of sour cream (if using), and a generous sprinkle of fresh chives. Serve immediately.

Timing & Intensity Summary

Phase	Task	Intensity	Time
1	Crisp the bacon	Medium	6–8 min
2	Sauté onion and garlic	Medium	5 min
3	Simmer cauliflower	Low	12–15 min
4	Blend and enrich with dairy	Medium	5–7 min
5	Finish and serve	Low	3 min
—	Total	—	~35–40 min

Recipe Notes & Variations

- Make-Ahead & Storage: The soup keeps in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 4 days. Reheat gently over low heat, stirring frequently — do not boil, or the dairy may separate. It also freezes well for up to 3 months; thaw overnight in the fridge and reheat gently.

- Thinner or Thicker Soup: For a thinner soup, add extra chicken broth after blending. For a thicker, heartier soup, reduce the broth to 3 cups.

- Cheese Swaps: Gruyère or white cheddar melt smoothly and add a nutty depth. Avoid pre-shredded cheese blends with anti-caking agents if possible, as they melt less smoothly.

- Vegetarian Version: Omit the bacon, use butter for sautéing, and substitute vegetable broth. Add a pinch of smoked paprika to mimic the bacon’s smokiness.

- Loaded Baked “Potato” Soup: Top with extra cheddar, sour cream, bacon, and chives for a flavor that’s remarkably close to a loaded baked potato.

- Dairy-Free Option: Substitute coconut cream for the heavy cream and a dairy-free cream cheese alternative — the texture will be slightly different but still delicious.

Nutrition Information (Estimated per serving, based on 6 servings)

Please note these values are estimates and will vary based on specific ingredients, brands, and portion sizes.

- Calories: 425 kcal
- Total Fat: 35g
- Saturated Fat: 19g
- Cholesterol: 105mg
- Sodium: 780mg
- Total Carbohydrates: 9g
- Dietary Fiber: 3g
- Total Sugars: 3g
- Net Carbs: 6g
- Protein: 15g