

Baked Ziti with Cauliflower: Ziti Gratinati

Recipe courtesy Mario Batali

See this recipe on air Thursday Nov. 09 at
10:30 AM ET/PT.

Show: [Molto Mario](#)

Episode: [Siracusa Trattoria](#)

Kosher salt

1 medium-sized head cauliflower, cut in large florets

1 teaspoon saffron

5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

6 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

3 anchovy fillets, salted variety, rinsed and filleted (optional)

1 1/2 tablespoons pine nuts

1 1/4 pounds ziti

1/2 cup freshly grated Pecorino-Romano

1 cup bread crumbs

Bring 6-quarts of water to a boil and add 2 tablespoons salt. Place the cauliflower florets into the boiling water. Cook until the cauliflower is slightly resistant to a fork, 7 to 8 minutes. Drain, reserving the cooking water. Set aside. Pour 1/4 cup of the cauliflower cooking water into a small bowl. Add the saffron and let it dissolve. Set aside.

In a 12 to 14-inch saute pan over high heat, heat 4 tablespoons olive oil until almost smoking. Add the garlic, florets and anchovies, and saute for 2 minutes. Add the pine nuts and saute for 1 minute. Remove from the heat and set aside.

Bring the cauliflower water back to a boil and add the ziti. Cook until parboiled, about half-done. Drain well.

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F.

Pour the ziti into a large, deep, ovenproof casserole. Stir in the cauliflower mixture and 1/2 of the cheese. Sprinkle with the saffron water and mix gently. Sprinkle with the remaining cheese. Crumble the bread crumbs on top and drizzle with the remaining 1 tablespoon of olive oil. Bake for 15 minutes. Serve immediately.