



Makes 6 cups poppers + ¾ cup sauce (4 Servings)
Preparation Time: 55 minutes
Cook Time: 20 minutes

INGREDIENTS:

2 heads garlic (2-inch bulbs)

1 12.3-oz. package firm silken-style tofu

2 teaspoons Dijon mustard

1 tablespoon + 2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar

½ teaspoon smoked paprika

½ teaspoon kosher salt

¼ teaspoon + ⅛ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper (optional)

½ cup unsweetened, unflavored plant milk

4 cups 1½ - to 2-inch cauliflower florets

1½ cups whole wheat panko bread crumbs

¼ cup coarse cornmeal

Air-Fried Cauliflower Poppers with Smoky Garlic Dipping Sauce

Air-fried to crispy perfection, these tender-on-the-inside **cauliflower** poppers feel like a deep-fried appetizer, with none of the unhealthy fats. Buttery oven-roasted garlic and smoked paprika give the Smoky Garlic Dipping Sauce a bold flavor that pairs well with the milder cauliflower. **Tofu** does double duty, showing up in the dipping sauce and in the buttermilk-style coating for the cauliflower. The battered cauliflower pieces get a dusting of **whole wheat panko bread crumbs** and cornmeal—then 10ish minutes in the air fryer and and pat yourself on the back for a standout appetizer. These tasty bites would also work well added to a salad.

For more inspiration, check out these tasty ideas:

- [Lemon-Garlic Roasted Baby Artichokes](#)
- [Air-Fried Fingerling Potatoes](#)
- [Crispy Baked Polenta Sticks with Ranch Dip](#)
- [Crispy Buffalo Cauliflower Bites](#)

By Laura Marzen, RD, LD

- 1 Preheat oven to 425°F. Cut the top ¼ inch off garlic bulbs so the clove tops are exposed. Remove any loose papery outer layers. Place bulbs, cut ends up, in custard cups or small ramekins. Cover and roast 35 to 40 minutes or until very soft. Let cool. Squeeze garlic from papery skin into a blender.
- 2 For dipping sauce, add half of the tofu, the mustard, 2 teaspoons of the vinegar, the paprika, ¼ teaspoon of the salt, ⅛ teaspoon of the black pepper, and the cayenne pepper (if using) to blender with garlic. Cover and blend until smooth, scraping sides of bowl as needed. Transfer to a serving bowl. Clean blender.
- 3 In the blender combine the remaining tofu, 1 tablespoon cider vinegar, ¼ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon black pepper, and the milk. Cover and blend until smooth. Transfer mixture to a large bowl. Add cauliflower florets; toss until well coated.
- 4 In a shallow dish stir together bread crumbs and cornmeal. Dip cauliflower, a few pieces at a time, in bread crumb mixture, turning to fully coat each piece. Arrange one-third of the coated cauliflower pieces in a single layer in an air-fryer basket.
- 5 Preheat air fryer to 400°F. Air-fry cauliflower 9 to 11 minutes or until browned and tender. Keep cooked cauliflower pieces warm in a 200°F oven. Repeat with remaining cauliflower pieces. Serve cauliflower with dipping sauce.