**Cauliflower Gratin**

2 Servings

½ head cauliflower (about 8 ounces)

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

2 tablespoons panko bread crumbs

½ ounces Parmesan cheese, grated (1/4 cup)

Salt and pepper to taste

1/8 teaspoon dry mustard

Small pinch freshly ground nutmeg

Small pinch cayenne pepper

¼ teaspoon cornstarch dissolved in ¼ teaspoon water

1 teaspoon minced fresh chives or parsley

Method:

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Pull off outer leaves of 1 head of cauliflower and trim stem. Using paring knife, cut around core to remove; halve core lengthwise and slice thin crosswise. Slice head into 1/2-inch-thick slabs. Cut stems from slabs to create florets that are about 1 1/2 inches tall; slice stems thin and reserve along with sliced core. Transfer florets to bowl, including any small pieces that may have been created during trimming, and set aside. Repeat with remaining head of cauliflower. (After trimming you should have about 3 cups of sliced stems and cores and 12 cups of florets.)
3. Combine sliced stems and cores, 2 cups florets, 3 cups water, and 1 tablespoon butter in Dutch oven and bring to boil over high heat. Place remaining florets in steamer basket (do not rinse bowl). Once mixture is boiling, place steamer basket in pot, cover, and reduce heat to medium. Steam florets in basket until translucent and stem ends can be easily pierced with paring knife, 10 to 12 minutes. Remove steamer basket and drain florets. Re-cover pot, reduce heat to low, and continue to cook stem mixture until very soft, about 10 minutes longer. Transfer drained florets to now-empty bowl.
4. While cauliflower is cooking, melt remaining butter in 10-inch skillet over medium heat. Add panko and cook, stirring frequently, until golden brown, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer to bowl and let cool. Once cool, add 2 tablespoons Parmesan and toss to combine.
5. Transfer stem mixture and cooking liquid to blender and add ½ teaspoons salt, a small pinch of pepper, the dry mustard, nutmeg, cayenne, and remaining 2 tablespoons Parmesan. Process until smooth and velvety, about 1 minute (puree should be pourable; adjust consistency with additional water as needed). With blender running, add cornstarch slurry. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Pour puree over cauliflower florets and toss gently to evenly coat. Transfer mixture to small ramekins and smooth top with spatula.
6. Scatter bread-crumb mixture evenly over top. Transfer dish to oven and bake until sauce bubbles around edges, 8-10 minutes. Let stand for 5 minutes minutes. Sprinkle with chives or parsley and serve.