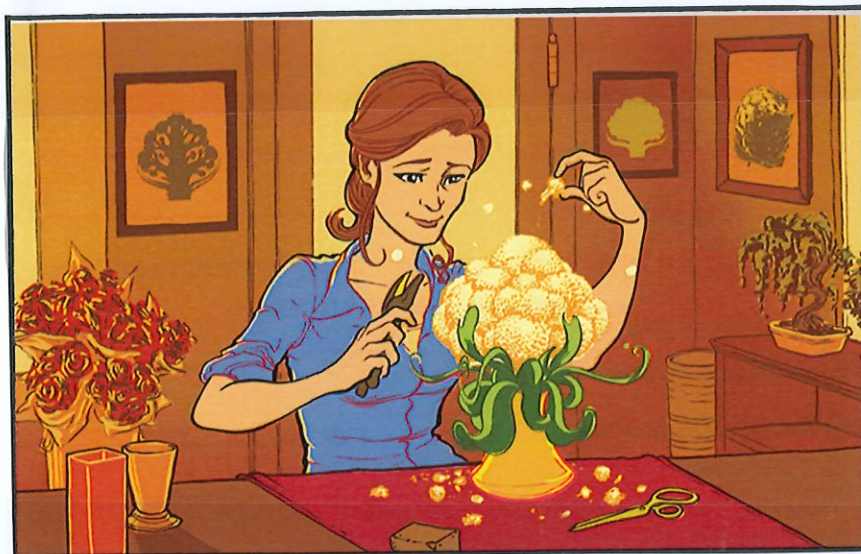


Write a guided analysis of the following text.

The following text is an article written by Dara Moskowitz Grumdahl for the online magazine *Experience Life*.

Ode to Cauliflower

If you love this nutrient-rich veggie, you might appreciate the evolutionary effort that created it.



By Dara Moskowitz Grumdahl

Now that cauliflower has earned superstar veggie status (available dark-roasted in all the fancy restaurants or minced as low-carb “rice” in all the hip health-food bistros), I come before you with amazing news: That bumpy cauliflower head? It’s actually a bunch of flowers!

Or rather, it’s a mass of tiny unopened flower buds, harvested before they could blossom. Flower buds! When you serve cauliflower rice, you’re spooning up a bouquet. When you baste a whole head of cauliflower and set it in the middle of the table, golden as a Thanksgiving turkey, it’s like feasting on a roasted rose.

OK, not exactly. Roses are from the family *Rosaceae*, and they have lots of petals. Cauliflowers are from the *Cruciferae* family — the word “cruciferous” refers to a cross, as these plants’ tiny flowers have four petals arranged in a simple X.

Other cruciferous vegetables — which are also known by yet another Latin name, *Brassicaceae* — include all the cabbages, as well as the mustards, broccolis, and radishes. (We usually eat only the roots of radishes, so how would we know the plants flower into Xs? But they do — or they would, if we didn’t eat their roots before their flowers had a chance to bloom.)

And even more amazingly, when we eat our beloved cauliflower, we’re not just eating flower buds: We’re eating *mutant* flower buds! It’s a minor miracle that they exist at all.

20 The Humble Mutant

Thousands of years ago, the original cabbage, *Brassica oleracea*, grew wild throughout Europe, from the British Isles to Greece. At some point, our ancestors went from foraging these wild plants (which look a bit like mustard greens) to harvesting seeds and planting them in gardens.

25 Then, on what I like to imagine was a fine sunny day on the island of Rhodes — that part of Greece that's just offshore from Turkey — something happened. Maybe it was a bumblebee that did it, buzzing from one cruciferous garden vegetable with a recessive gene* to another cruciferous garden vegetable with a recessive gene. Anyway, somehow these two odd genes met and grew into the mutant cruciferous garden vegetable we call the cauliflower.

30 Imagine being the first gardener to see *that* come up. What a crazy-looking vegetable! You'd invite everyone in the village over to take a look. "You don't see *that* every day!" you'd boast, full of bewilderment and pride.

[...]

Cultivated cauliflower slowly spread west from Rhodes. It made it to Italy next, but didn't find its way to France until sometime in the 1500s. In the definitive agricultural textbook of 1600, *Théâtre de l'agriculture*, author Olivier de Serres referred to the plant as *cauli-fiori* — floral cabbage. (If 35 etymology excites you, you'll notice that the "caul" sound at the front of the word is similar to what you hear in "collards," "kohlraabi," and "colcannon" — a dish made of cabbage and mashed potatoes — as well as "coleslaw." *Kohl* is German for "cabbage.")

An Honest Miracle

40 Here in the 21st century, seemingly everything is a miracle. Every time I turn around, a new protein powder or antioxidant bar shows up on my desk, invariably containing proprietary ingredients and enough marketing hype to make you believe it is a modern marvel.

But, in fact, we are surrounded by honest miracles that no one markets because no one owns them. Cauliflower and other whole foods are miracles that we inherited from nameless, ancient souls. Maybe it was a laughing woman who sang to her plants while her eyes caught every vital detail of 45 their growth. Maybe it was a quiet man with bulging knuckles and a memory for past weather.

All I know is that we have inherited miracles. In cauliflower, we received a miracle of flavor, a miracle of health, and a miracle of botany. Mediterranean mutant flower-bud clusters — delicious roasted, sautéed, riced, or puréed! If that doesn't make you want to eat your veggies, I don't know what will.

50 And if you happen to be the one making the roasted cauliflower for Thanksgiving this year, please take a moment as you cut into it to give thanks for the great chain of circumstances that made something so bizarre and difficult and wonderful also so common.

* recessive gene: a gene whose presence and effects are concealed by a dominant gene

— How and to what effect are diction and imagery used in this text?
