

CLASSIC FRENCH ONION SOUP

(Adapted from "Soups, Stews & Chilis")

Serves: 6

4 lbs yellow onions, halved and sliced pole to pole into ¼" thick pieces
3 Tbsp unsalted butter, cut into 3 pieces
Salt & ground black pepper
Water
1/2 cup dry sherry
4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
2 cups beef broth
6 sprigs fresh thyme, tied with kitchen twine
1 bay leaf



CROUTONS

1 small baguette, cut on the bias into ½" thick slices
8 oz Gruyere cheese, shredded (2 cups)

FOR THE SOUP:

1. Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 400°. Generously spray inside of large Dutch oven with vegetable oil spray, then stir in onions, butter and 1 tsp salt. Cover and bake until onions wilt slightly and look moist, about 1 hour.
2. Stir onions thoroughly, scraping the bottom and sides of the pot. Cover partially (leaving about 1 inch of the pot open) and continue to cook in oven until onions are very soft and golden brown, 1-1/2 to 1-3/4 hours longer, stirring onions thoroughly after 1 hour. (At this point, the pot of onions can be cooled, covered and refrigerated up to 3 days before continuing with Step 3).
3. Carefully remove the pot from the oven and place over medium-high heat. Using oven mitts to handle the pot, continue to cook onions, stirring and scraping pot often, until liquid evaporates, onions brown and bottom of pot is coated with a dark crust, 20-25 minutes. (If onions begin to brown too quickly, reduce heat to medium. Also, be sure to scrape any of the browned bits that collect on the spoon back into the onions.)
4. Stir in 1/4 cup water, thoroughly scraping up browned crust. Continue to cook until water evaporates and pot bottom has formed another dark crust, 6-8 minutes. Repeat this process of deglazing 2-3 more times, until onions are very dark brown.
5. Stir in the sherry and cook until it evaporates, about 5 minutes. Stir in chicken broth, beef broth, 2 more cups water, thyme bundle, bay leaf and 1/2 tsp salt, scraping up any remaining browned bits. Bring to a simmer, cover and cook for 30 minutes. Remove thyme bundle and bay leaf and season with salt and pepper to taste.

FOR THE CROUTONS:

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 400°. Lay baguette slices on a rimmed baking sheet and bake until dry, crisp and lightly golden, about 10 minutes, flipping the slices over halfway through baking.

TO SERVE:

Position oven rack 6" from broiler element and heat broiler. Set individual broiler-safe crocks on baking sheet and fill each with about 1-1/2 cups soup. Top each bowl with 1 or 2 baguette slices (do no overlap slices) and sprinkle evenly with the cheese. Broil until cheese is melted and bubbly around the edges, 3-5 minutes. Let cool 5 minutes before serving.