

— AMERICA'S —
TEST KITCHEN

French Onion Soup

SERVES Serves 6**TIME** 2½ hours

Why This Recipe Works

The key to this bistro classic was a shortcut-free, hour-long caramelization of the onions. We started with a mountain of sliced onions in a Dutch oven with some melted butter, salt (to draw out moisture), and sugar (to jump-start caramelization). We cooked the onions covered at first to trap steam and soften them, and then we removed the lid to allow the released liquid to evaporate. We continued to cook the onions, scraping up and stirring in the browned bits (or fond) that formed, until the onions were soft and caramel-colored. Deglazing with wine (red for its robust flavor) ensured that all the flavorful browned bits ended up in the soup. We added rich, meaty beef broth, as well as thyme and bay leaves, and simmered it all together until the flavors melded. To make the soup easier to eat, we decided to forgo the traditional toasted slice of baguette in favor of more easily spoonable croutons. To assemble, we ladled the soup into individual crocks and then topped them with the croutons, shredded Gruyère, and shredded Parmesan (for extra nuttiness). A bit of Gruyère under the croutons protected the bread from getting too soggy.



Gather Your Ingredients

- ☐ 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- ☐ 4 pounds onions, halved and sliced thin
- ☐ 1¾ teaspoons table salt, divided
- ☐ 1 teaspoon sugar
- ☐ 1 cup dry red wine
- ☐ 8 cups beef broth
- ☐ 4 sprigs fresh thyme

Before You Begin

- * Be patient when caramelizing the onions; the entire process takes 55 to 70 minutes. If you don't have oven-safe soup crocks, form six individual piles of croutons on a baking sheet, cover them with the cheese, and broil them on the middle oven rack until the cheese is melted, 1 to 3 minutes. Then use a spatula to transfer the crouton portions to the individual filled soup bowls.

Instructions

1. Melt butter in Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Stir in onions, 1 teaspoon salt, and sugar. Cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until onions release their liquid and are uniformly translucent, about 20 minutes.

- ☐ **2** bay leaves
- ☐ **¾** teaspoon pepper, divided
- ☐ **6** ounces baguette, cut into 1-inch cubes
- ☐ **3** tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- ☐ **8** ounces Gruyère cheese, shredded (2 cups)
- ☐ **1½** ounces Parmesan cheese, shredded (½ cup)

- 2.** Uncover and cook until liquid has evaporated and browned bits start to form on bottom of pot, 5 to 10 minutes. Reduce heat to medium and continue to cook, uncovered, until onions are caramel colored, 30 to 40 minutes longer, stirring and scraping with wooden spoon as browned bits form on bottom of pot and spreading onions into even layer after stirring. (If onions or browned bits begin to scorch, reduce heat to medium-low.)
- 3.** Stir in wine, scraping up any browned bits, and cook until nearly evaporated, about 1 minute. Stir in broth, thyme sprigs, bay leaves, ½ teaspoon pepper, and ½ teaspoon salt. Increase heat to high and bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, uncovered, for 30 minutes.
- 4.** While onions simmer, adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Toss baguette, oil, remaining ¼ teaspoon salt, and remaining ¼ teaspoon pepper together in bowl. Transfer to rimmed baking sheet and bake until golden and crisp, 15 to 18 minutes. Remove sheet from oven and set aside. Increase oven temperature to 500 degrees.
- 5.** Set six 12-ounce oven-safe crocks on second rimmed baking sheet. Discard thyme sprigs and bay leaves and season soup with salt and pepper to taste. Divide soup evenly among crocks (about 1½ cups each). Divide 1 cup Gruyère evenly among crocks, top with croutons, and sprinkle with remaining Gruyère, then Parmesan. Bake until cheeses are melted and soup is bubbly around edges, 5 to 7 minutes. Let cool for 5 minutes before serving.