



French Onion Soup

serves 4-6

- 3 tablespoons butter
- 4 pounds yellow onions, about 6 large
- 2 cups water
- 1/2 cup dry sherry
- 6 cups beef stock, preferably homemade
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 6-12 slices country bread, well-toasted
- 8 ounces Gruyère or Raclette cheese, shredded

Heat oven to 400 degrees. Peel onions, slice in half from pole to pole, then in 1/4"-thick slices, also from pole to pole. Place butter in heavy-bottomed, large (at least 7-quart) Dutch oven. Add onions and 1 teaspoon sea salt. Cook, covered, for 1 hour (onions will be watery and slightly reduced in volume). Remove pot from oven and stir onions, scraping bottom and sides of pot. Return pot to oven with lid slightly ajar and continue to cook until onions are very soft and a rich golden brown, 1 1/2 to 1 3/4 hours longer, stirring onions and scraping bottom and sides of pot after 1 hour.

Remove pot from oven and place over medium-high heat. Cook onions, stirring frequently and scraping bottom and sides of pot, until liquid evaporates and onions gradually turn deep brown, 15 to 20 minutes, reducing heat if onions brown too quickly. Continue to cook, stirring frequently, until pot bottom is coated with a dark crust, 6 to 8 minutes, adjusting heat as necessary. Be sure to scrape any dark bits that collect on spoon back into onions. Stir in 1/4 cup water, scraping pot bottom to loosen crust, and cook until water evaporates and pot bottom has formed a dark crust again, another 6-8 minutes. Repeat process of deglazing 2 or 3 more times, until onions are very dark brown. Stir in sherry and cook, stirring frequently, until it

evaporates, about 5 minutes.

Stir in stock, 1 cup water, thyme, bay leaf and 1/2 teaspoon sea salt, scraping up any final bits of browned crust on bottom and sides of pot. Increase heat to high and bring to a boil. Immediately reduce heat to low, cover and simmer gently for 30 minutes. Remove and discard bay leaf, then taste for seasoning, adjusting salt and adding freshly ground black.

Adjust oven rack 6 inches from broiler element and heat broiler. Set ovenproof bowls or small casseroles on a baking sheet and fill each with about 1 3/4-2 cups soup. Top each bowl with 1 or 2 slices of bread (do not overlap) and sprinkle evenly and generously with cheese. Broil until melted and bubbly, 3-5 minutes. Cool slightly before serving.