

French Onion Soup

serves 8–10

A vegetarian version of this rich and robust classic. This is full flavored and satisfying. Add a crisp salad for a delicious winter meal.

2 T. unsalted butter	3 bay leaves
2 T. extra virgin olive oil	6–8 cups vegetable stock
5 pounds red onions	2 T. hearty miso (optional)
1 T. salt	12 1/2" thick slices baguettes
1–2 tsp. freshly ground pepper	2 cups shredded Gruyere, or other
2 cups robust red wine	similar nutty melting cheese
2 T. dry sherry	1/4 cup minced fresh parsley
	leaves

Heat the butter and olive oil in a medium large wide soup pot on medium high heat. If you have a cast iron kettle, use it for this soup. Slice the onions in quarters, then into very thin quarter rings. When the oil is sizzling, add the onions and stir well. Cook on medium high heat until the onions begin to stick. Then add the salt and pepper and stir well again.

As the onions stick, drizzle in a tablespoon or two at a time of the 2 cups of red wine, stirring well, to release the bits of stuck food (called the fond ... a flavor-building treasure) into the soup. Repeat this process 3–4 times as necessary. After 10 minutes turn the heat down to medium low. Add the sherry, stir well, and place a lid on the pot. Stir every 4–5 minutes. Allow the onions to turn a rich dark brown color. Cook for a total of 40–50 minutes.

Add the remaining red wine and turn the heat up to high until the extra liquid has evaporated, stirring constantly. Add the bay leaves and enough stock to make a brothy but robust soup. Simmer for 5 minutes and turn off the heat. If using miso (fermented soybean paste), add that to the soup now. Taste and add more salt or pepper if desired.

If you've used an oven-tolerant soup pot, proceed. If not, pour the soup into a large, deep casserole pan, or heat-tolerant individual bowls, then proceed. Place the baguette (or other crusty bread) slices on top of the soup. Sprinkle on the cheese, then parsley. Broil or bake at your highest heat until bubbly. Serve immediately. Enjoy the “ooohs” and “aaahhs” of your appreciative eaters.