

# French Onion Soup

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[Prep: 20min / Cook: 1hr 15min TOTAL: 1hr 35min]

[6 servings]

- 3 lbs red onions, peeled and thinly sliced [about 4-5 medium onions]
- 8 cloves of garlic, peeled and roughly chopped
- 2 bay leaves
- 4 table spoons olive oil
- 1 cup dry red wine [I used Cabernet Sauvignon, but Merlot and Syrah will work as well]
- 8 cups water
- 6 slices stale bread lightly toasted, or 8 slices of fresh bread toasted
- 6-8 oz. grated gruyere [you can also sub in some Emmenthaler or regular Swiss]
- 1 small bunch thyme, 1 teaspoon reserved
- 5 large dried sage leaves, if using fresh you'll need fewer, it's more potent
- 2 teaspoons salt
- salt and pepper to taste

The prep for this soup is painfully simple, peel and thinly slice your red onions - but choppers beware you will most likely cry. This is a large amount of onions and it is hard to get through cutting all of them without taking a break. The only trick that works for me (sort of) is biting the wooden end of a matchstick. Now onto the garlic, the cloves just need to be roughly chopped - which is great because all you have to do is press the cloves with the flat side of the blade of the knife you're working with - the garlic will smooch and pop out of its skin a little, making it super easy to peel. Then just a few little chops - no tedious mincing required.

Once you're done with the chopping, set up your stove with two skillets - as big as you have would be ideal - and a large pot, at least 3 quarts. Add 1 cup red wine, 2 bay leaves, small bunch thyme and minced garlic to the pot. Turn the heat to med-high under both of the skillets. As soon as they get hot - about 1 minute - pour 1 tablespoon of olive oil in each skillet and let heat up for about 30 seconds before adding the onions. They may need to be cooked in 2 batches, you don't want to overfill the skillets, otherwise the onions won't brown evenly. Add salt to each - about 1 teaspoon and a few grinds of pepper. Let sauté for about 10 minutes stirring occasionally so they don't burn. Have 2 cups water ready - once the onions are finished, they should be a dark golden brown and may have sections of dark brown if they got a little burned (that's ok!), turn off the heat and add them to the pot - then pour one cup water into each skillet to deglaze them. Using a wooden spoon scrape up all the little bits left on the bottom of the skillet, the water will take on the caramelized onion flavor. Add deglazing water to the pot. Repeat until all the onions have been cooked.

Turn heat to mid-high under the pot and bring mixture of onions, garlic, red wine, deglazing water and herbs to a simmer, let sit for 5 minutes. Add two teaspoons of salt a few grinds of pepper and 8 cups of water. Bring to a boil - this will take a few minutes, if the tap water is hot when you add it this will speed up the process a little. Once the soup is boiling turn the heat down so it stays a slow simmer - you may need play with the heat a little. Let simmer for about 45 minutes.

Now you can start prepping the bread, cheese and herbs. I suggested 6 slices of bread because this soup yields 6 bowls, however if you are making this recipe but only have a few mouths to feed you'll only need a few slices. Also this soup (pre-cheese) will last a few days in the fridge and you can always freeze it for later! Grate the desired amount of cheese into a small mixing bowl. Chop the sage and thyme - or any herbs that you have on hand and think will go well - add them to the cheese and grate some fresh pepper on top. Mix it well. If your bread is fresh and not stale, now is the time you should toast it.

After 45 minutes have past, taste the soup and season accordingly, you can always add another splash of red wine or even sherry, cognac or brandy. Let cook for 5-10 more minutes.

You can make the soup ahead of time (up to a day ahead) and re-heat it. Once the soup is ready to plate put your oven on broil, make sure the rack in the oven is near the top, about 6 inches away, then pile the cheese and herb mixture onto the bread and put it in the oven. \*I put the bread slices on foil first and then on a baking dish, otherwise the cheese melt over the sides and stick to the dish. You only need to leave the toast in the oven for about 45 seconds, just until the cheese is a browned and bubbly.

Now you are ready to plate the soup. Pour a few ladlefuls into warmed bowls and put the freshly made cheesy toast on top. Grate some fresh pepper and enjoy!

\*If you have proper soup crocks with a rolled rim, follow these instructions for a more traditional presentation of the dish. Place the piece(s) of toast in the bowl before adding the soup and cover well with gruyere. Put the whole crock into the oven under the broiler, about 8 inches away from heat, for 3-4 minutes.