



INGREDIENTS

- 125g butter
- 1kg brown onions, finely sliced
- Salt flakes and freshly ground white pepper, to taste
- ½ cup dry vermouth
- 1 tablespoon plain flour
- 1 litre veal or beef stock
- 2 fresh bay leaves, bruised
- 6 sprigs thyme, leaves picked
- 6 slices baguette
- 2 cups (about 125g) freshly grated gruyere

French Onion Soup

Soup, bread, cheese: three of my favourite comfort foods. I especially love French onion soup because it combines all three! Beef stock is considered the traditional base, but I've also successfully used chicken stock or even just water. If you use the stock leftover from poaching veal for vitello tonnato, the vinegar cuts through some of the sweetness from the onion, which I like. You can also use a good commercial stock such as Maggie Beer's diluted 50/50 with water. Sherry and soup is a classic combo, and I love the rich nuttiness of an old amontillado, such as Romate's Old & Plus VORS, with the sweet savouriness of French onion soup.

Serves 6 as an entrée

METHOD

1. Melt butter in a large saucepan.
2. Add onion and a good pinch of salt and cook, covered, over low-medium heat for 20-30 minutes, stirring occasionally, until soft.
3. Uncover and cook for a further 45 minutes or so, over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until golden.
4. Increase heat to high, add vermouth and boil for a minute, scrapping the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon to remove any bits stuck to it.
5. Reduce heat to low, add flour and stir for 2-3 minutes.
6. Add stock, bay leaf, thyme and pepper. Increase heat and stir until it comes to the boil.
7. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 30 minutes.
8. Meanwhile, toast baguette slices.
9. Ladle soup into heatproof serving bowls, discarding the bay leaves, and place on an oven tray.
10. Float a slice of baguette in each bowl and mound the cheese on generously.
11. Place under the overhead grill for a few minutes, until cheese is bubbling and golden.
12. Serve immediately.