

French Onion Soup – Mastering The Art of French Cooking by Julia Child



Here is Julia's complete recipe. She begins with a short prefatory note:

The onions for an onion soup need a long, slow cooking in butter and oil, then a long, slow simmering in stock for them to develop the deep, rich flavor which characterizes a perfect brew. You should therefore count on 2 1/2 hours at least from start to finish. Though the preliminary cooking in butter requires some watching, the actual simmering can proceed almost unattended.

INGREDIENTS:

1 1/2 lbs. or about 5 cups of thinly sliced yellow onions

3 T butter

1 T vegetable oil

A heavy-bottomed, 4 quart covered saucepan

1 tsp. salt

1/4 tsp. sugar

3 T flour

2 quarts boiling brown stock, canned beef bouillon, or 1 quart of boiling water and 1 quart of stock or bouillon.

1/2 cup dry white wine or dry white vermouth

Salt and pepper to taste

3 T cognac

Rounds of hard-toasted French bread (see recipe following)

1 to 2 cups grated Swiss or Parmesan cheese

CROUTES — HARD-TOASTED FRENCH BREAD:

12 to 16 slices of French bread, cut 3/4 to 1 inch thick

Olive oil or beef drippings

A cut clove of garlic

PROCEDURE FOR THE SOUP:

Cook the onions slowly with the butter and oil in a covered saucepan for 15 minutes.

Uncover, raise heat to moderate and stir in the salt and sugar. Cook for 30 to 40 minutes stirring frequently, until the onions have turned an even, deep golden brown. Sprinkle in the flour and stir for 3 minutes.

Off heat, blend in the boiling liquid. Add the wine and season to taste. Simmer partially covered for 30 to 40 minutes or more, skimming occasionally. Correct seasoning.

Set aside uncovered until ready to serve. Then reheat to the simmer.

Just before serving, stir in the cognac. Pour into a soup tureen or soup cups over the rounds of bread and pass the cheese separately.

PROCEDURE TO MAKE THE CROUTES:

Place the bread in one layer in a roasting pan and bake in a preheated 325 degree oven for about half an hour, until it is thoroughly dried out and lightly browned.

Halfway through the baking, each side may be basted with a teaspoon of olive oil or beef drippings; and after baking, each piece may be rubbed with cut garlic.

NOTES: After making this soup for over 30 years, we have learned a few things that affect this soup. First, do not use “sweet” onions. Second, be patient in making this soup. Do not hurry the onions as they are browning. You may end up with black onions, which means starting over, perhaps a trip to buy more onions or—worse—canned soup if the stores are closed on a holiday.

Third, though I hesitate to admit it, I have never made beef stock. I use canned broth, and the soup is still darned good. Heat the broth just until it steams while the onions are browning.

Fourth, cognac is expensive; a good domestic brandy works just fine. Today, I use dry or semi-dry Madeira wine instead of cognac or brandy because we prefer the flavor it adds to the soup. This is the one major change I have made in Julia’s recipe. You might want to try the recipe both ways to see which flavor you prefer.

And fifth, for the dry white wine, sauvignon blanc or Chardonnay are both good choices. If you plan on serving wine with the soup, choose one that you enjoy drinking to use in the soup.

When making the croutes I arrange the bread on cookie sheets. If you discover that you are out of garlic cloves, you can mix a dash or two of garlic powder into a couple of tablespoons of olive oil to baste the toasted bread rounds. Don’t overdo the garlic; you want just a hint of garlic on the bread.

Instead of pouring soup over the toasted rounds of bread I usually float a croute on the soup in each soup bowl, sprinkle a little Swiss cheese on top and offer extra cheese at the table for guests to add more if they like. We prefer a good aged Swiss cheese to Parmesan on this soup, but try both to see which one you like better.