

Time is the secret ingredient in this French Onion Soup



French Onion Soup with Gruyere Croutons

Photo Susie Iventosch

By Susie Iventosch

Last week, when temps dipped across the country, and ice storms persisted, I decided there was no place like home, and no better time for French Onion Soup! There is nothing like a steaming bowl of hot soup to warm a winter's day, and classic French Onion Soup is a universal favorite. It's so comforting with a toasty slice of French bread smothered in bubbly, melted Gruyere cheese. And, if you've never made French Onion Soup, you'll be surprised at how easy it is to make! It just takes a bit of time to caramelize the large quantity of onions. Time is the secret ingredient to making this soup. It takes about 40 minutes (and sometimes a bit longer), for the sugars in the onions to properly caramelize. You can add extra sugar to speed up

the process, but we find that makes our soup too sweet, and prefer to let them caramelize in their own sweet time. But, after that, it's a snap.

So, have a little bit of patience, slice the onions very thin, and start cooking them over low heat in a little butter and olive oil, stirring occasionally. Take your time to get them nice and golden brown, not burned. I learned a little trick recently, which is if the onions look like they are beginning to dry out during the caramelizing process, simply add a little bit of water to the pan to keep them nice and moist. This saves on adding too much butter or oil, and it works like a charm.

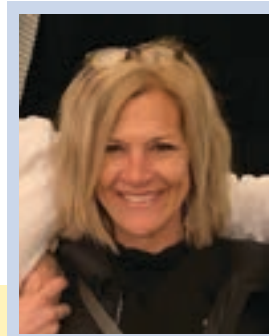
I usually use sherry as the wine in my soup to deglaze the pan once the onions are thoroughly caramelized, but this time I actually used Calvados (an apple brandy) and it was deli-

cious. Calvados is a fun French apple brandy from the Normandy region and it's so good.

We use a combination of beef broth and chicken broth for our French Onion soup, but you can use all beef broth if you prefer. I think it does need at least some beef broth. Because I'm usually in a hurry and want to eat the soup sooner rather than later, I use packaged broth, but if you have the time, you can definitely make a homemade broth or stock with bones and meat and a mirepoix of carrots, onions, celery, seasonings

and herbs.

Another great thing about this soup is that you can make it in advance and refrigerate or freeze it for a later time. Enough chit chat ... it's time to get started on making this tantalizing recipe!



Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com. If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977. Or visit <https://treksandbites.com>

French Onion Soup

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

6 large yellow onions, peeled, cut in half and very thinly sliced
2 tbsp. butter
3 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. black or white pepper
1 large clove garlic, minced
1/2 tsp. dried thyme (or 1 tbsp. fresh thyme leaves)
4 cups beef broth (or stock)
4 cups chicken broth (or stock)
1/4 cup dry sherry or Calvados
Salt and Pepper to taste
4 thick slices of French bread
2 cups grated Gruyere cheese

DIRECTIONS

Melt butter with olive oil in a large pot or Dutch oven. Add onions, cover and cook over low heat, just until wilted and translucent. Remove cover and continue to cook over low heat for about 40 minutes, or until the onions are beautifully browned and caramelized. Stir occasionally and add a few tablespoons of water at a time, as needed, to keep the onions moist.

Once the onions are caramelized, add the sherry and scrape the bottom of the pan with a spoon or spatula to pick up any bits of onion stuck to the bottom. Stir in the minced garlic, salt, pepper and thyme, and continue to cook for a minute or so. Stir in both broths and simmer over medium-low heat, uncovered, for about 30 minutes.

Preheat the broiler to high. Toast the French bread slices. Set aside.

Place your bowls or ramekins on a baking sheet. Spoon hot soup into the individual ramekins, being sure to get plenty of the onions in each bowl. Lay one piece of toast over the top and sprinkle grated Gruyere evenly over the toast and soup. Broil until the cheese is melted and bubbly and beginning to brown.

Serve while it's hot!

Deferred? Now what?

By Elizabeth LaScala, PhD

When the pandemic first hit, many worried that applications for admission would decrease in much the same way as enrollment numbers dropped. However, the opposite occurred and this past early cycle results show applications are up, in some cases dramatically so. Due to this increase in demand, many otherwise qualified students found themselves deferred to regular admissions cycle.

Why has this occurred? One expert suggests that most of the early action/early decision deferrals can be contributed to the deluge of digital recruitment strategies, including virtual information sessions, tours, and student panels. One college advisor calls colleges 'marketing machines' whose efforts to connect with students on social media re-

sulted in unparalleled awareness of schools that students otherwise would not have thought were within their reach – in turn this stimulated greater numbers of applications.

I would amend the social media hypothesis to add that digital strategies increased the perception of college access rather than actual access and led many students and their families to overestimate their chances of admission. If schools were needier, many reasonably figured that they would be more likely to admit qualified, or even somewhat less qualified students. This assumption was most in error.

Added to this thinking was the tendency to believe that the increase in chances of admission applied across the board, even to the most selective schools. Thus, the biggest rises in applications were directly proportional to the selectivity of the colleges, and so

were the deferral (and denial) rates. It seems that the most selective schools, often among the wealthiest, had the greatest resources to weather the pandemic storm, while maintaining their high standards for admission.

What should a deferred student do who still hopes to be considered during the regular admission cycle? First, remember that being deferred means the college is still interested enough in you to consider your application. If you've been working hard academically and maintained your extracurricular involvement, I recommend writing a Letter of Continued Interest. Here are some tips:

1) Keep your letter short, upbeat, and polite.
2) Focus on relevant updates to your application. Highlight specific achievements like improved test scores, better grades, or a recent award. If you applied as a finance major

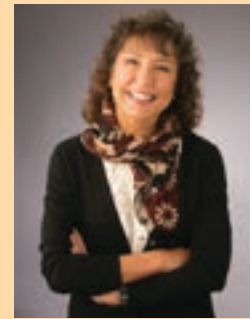
and you transformed a B in calculus to an A, tell them, since it is relevant to the school and your proposed major.

3) Send supplemental materials that support your updates only if the school accepts them.
4) Follow their rules. If they originally asked for two letters of recommendation, do not

send them a third.

My recommended word limit for your letter is 300. By comparison, this article is 461 words. It is too long for a Letter of Continued Interest. Colleges have your application, so avoid repetition. Get your point across and be done!

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Elizabeth LaScala, PhD, brings decades of admissions expertise to personally guide each student through applying to well-matched colleges, making each step more manageable and less stressful. She has placed hundreds of students in the most prestigious colleges and universities in the US. Elizabeth attends conferences, visits campuses and makes personal contacts with admissions networks to stay current on the evolving nature of college admissions. She and her professional team offer resume development, test preparation, academic tutoring, value analysis, merit and need-based scholarship search and more.



'Anything Goes' SF production taps local talent



Submitted by Jonathan White

Renee DeWeese Moran, the executive director and founder of Performing Academy in Lafayette, will be playing "Angel/Ensemble" in 42nd Street Moon's upcoming production of the Tony Award winning "Anything Goes," which launches the company's 2023 Mainstage Season. This perennial favorite, first produced on Broadway in 1934, has twice

Renee DeWeese Moran Photo provided

won the Tony Award for "Best Revival of a Musical" (1987 and 2011) and features music and lyrics by Cole Porter.

"Anything Goes" is one of the greatest romantic farce musicals, with star-crossed lovers, mistaken identities, lots of tap-dancing, and one of the greatest collections of Cole Porter songs found in any one show," said Executive Artistic Director Daniel Thomas. "We're fortunate to have a group of artists who can tell

this story with today's sensibilities while keeping the fast-paced 1930s comedy style. 'Anything goes' is lightness, laughter, and love, and a fantastic way to kick off 2023."

Farcical hijinks abound in this theatrical romp across the Atlantic, in which a young ocean-liner stowaway, Billy Crocker, sets out to win the affections of Hope Harcourt, with plenty of elaborate disguises, tap-dancing sailors, and good old-fashioned blackmail

along the way. A hilarious, heart-warming romantic comedy, featuring such classics as "I Get a Kick Out of You," "You're the Top," and "It's De-Lovely," this offers an evening of "sheer escape" into a world of side-splitting laughter, toe-tapping music, and plenty of heart.

"Anything Goes" runs from Feb. 23 to March 12 and will perform at San Francisco's Gateway Theatre. Tickets: 42ndstmoon.org/anything-goes/



Robins get to work as spring season is right around the corner

The robins don't seem to realize that it is still winter for five more weeks. With flowers and fruit trees budding earlier and earlier, colorful robins have invaded our Lamorinda gardens. Flocks, like these seen here enjoying young apricot blossoms in an Orinda yard, have been stripping trees of their freshly

Photo Jeff Heyman

sprouted fruit. Perhaps drunk on all that fruit, the robins seem to think spring has sprung. Sure, it may still be winter technically, but from the sound of bird-song in our gardens and the neighborhood invasion of robins, spring in Lamorinda is right around the corner. – Jeff Heyman

Annual bookmark contest opens for entrants

Submitted by Katherine Pekrul

Friends of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center is looking for K-8 students to create an original bookmark illustrating a favorite book. Entry forms are available in Lafayette school libraries, the Lafayette Library and Friends Corner Book Shop. The contest began Feb. 10 and all entries are due

March 3. Winners will be recognized at the library on April 27 during an award ceremony. The beautiful printed bookmarks will be available for all library and book shop patrons to use and enjoy. The winning bookmarks will be framed by Anthony's Custom Picture Framers and displayed in the library and book shop. For more information, contact Kay Pekrul, kae865@hotmail.com