

Rustic Onion Soup

Adapted from Patricia Wells' Bistro Cooking, Workman, 1989.

This soup is an amazing way to use up Thanksgiving leftovers – turkey stock, the toasted bread cubes that didn't make it into the stuffing, and even a little bit of the gravy. But the recipe is nearly as good if you start from scratch – something I've done many times. It's not French onion soup – but it is the spicy cousin of that bistro classic. Note: you do need oven-proof soup bowls.

The crucial step is slow roasting the sliced onions. Leave them in the oven, clean your house, take a walk. They'll be done in two hours, and your house will smell amazing.

3 pounds (4 large) red onions, sliced into thin rings
1 pound (1 large) white onion sliced into thin rings
½ cup sage leaves, chopped fine
8 tablespoons unsalted butter, sliced thin
Salt, pepper and balsamic vinegar

8 cups turkey (or chicken) stock
3 small, hot chilies, diced
¼ cup turkey gravy (optional)
2 tablespoons red pepper flakes

2 cups toasted 1 inch bread squares
2 cups grated Gruyère cheese

Preheat your oven to 350° F. Spread the onion rings and sage out in a large baking pan, and dot the top of the onions with the butter slices. Roast for ten minutes, and when the butter has melted, add the salt, pepper and a few dashes of balsamic vinegar. (I go easy on the salt, heavy on the pepper – it really depends on the character of the stock you use. But you can - and should, taste and adjust the seasoning when you add the onions to the stock.)

Roast the onions for two hours – until the butter is pretty much incorporated, and the onions are golden brown. I like to stir them two or three times, just to insure they caramelize evenly.

In a large stock pot, bring the stock, chilies and gravy to a simmer. Stir in the red pepper flakes and the caramelized onions.

Turn your oven to broil. Fill your soup bowls no more than ¾ full of soup. Add as many bread cubes as feel right to you, and cover each serving with a generous sprinkling of cheese. This soup is rich - you'll have enough soup for 6 -8 servings, or more.

Broil just until the cheese melts, and serve – and be careful with those hot bowls!