
RED WINE AND CAMELIZED ONION SOUP WITH CHEESE CROSTONI

This hearty soup is a specialty of Piedmont, a favorite on winter tables when something hot and comforting is in order. You can substitute leeks or shallots for the red onions if you prefer a gentler taste; and of course, any melting cheese (such as Raclette or Comté) will work as well as the Fontina. You can pour the soup into ovenproof bowl and top with the bread and cheese to serve the soup French onion soup style; I prefer to keep the bread crispy until the last possible moment, so I top bowlfuls of the soup with the baked crostoni (basically oversized crostini) to prevent the bread from getting soggy in the soup.

To accentuate the flavor of red wine in the soup, you can brush the bread with some of the wine before topping with the cheese; note that this will bring in an additional note of acidity.

Serves 2

- 15 grams (0.5 ounces) unsalted butter
- 450 grams (1 pound) red onions, thinly sliced (weight before peeling)
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 125 milliliters (1/2 cup) dry red wine
- 750 milliliters (3 cups) chicken or vegetable broth
- 125 grams (4 ounces) thickly sliced country bread
- 60 grams (2 ounces) grated Fontina

1. Melt the butter in a heavy, wide pot over medium heat. Add the onions and season with the salt and pepper. Cook for 30 minutes, or until they are very soft and caramelized; stir every few minutes to ensure they cook evenly. Add a bit of water to the pot if needed to prevent scorching. The key is low and slow cooking.
2. Deglaze with the wine and cook 5 minutes, scraping the bottom of the pan to dislodge any juices and incorporate them into the onions. The wine should reduce to a thick glaze.
3. Pour in the broth and bring to a boil, uncovered.
4. Cook for 30 minutes, uncovered, over low heat. Be sure to stir once in a while. The goal is to reduce the broth to about 2 cups. Adjust the seasoning.
5. Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 425°F convection or 450°F regular.
6. Place the sliced bread on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet and top with the grated Fontina.
7. Bake in the preheated oven until golden and melted.
8. Ladle the soup into 2 soup bowls and top with the hot cheese crostoni. Serve immediately.