

Onion Soup with an Epoisses and Caraway Crust

Recipe given to us from John Whaite

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There are many different ways of making a French onion soup: some recipes involve wine, some cognac, while others use both. I'm supposing that most regions of France, if not most families, will have their own method and ingredients list.

Epoisses is a [cheese from Burgundy](#) and I haven't seen it used for the characteristically lavish crust, but for me it's a no-brainer: the cheese is soft and pungent, accompanying the sweet onions perfectly. [Here I've rounded out the Epoisses with some Comté.](#)

Caraway is something I eat regularly with Epoisses – if not caraway bread then I just scatter the seeds over spoonfuls of the cheese.

I find the sweetness of pink onions – Roscoff or Rosanna – makes for the best soup, but if they prove a little trickier to come by, just use half red and half brown.

Serves 2 - 4

For the croutons

- 1 x French baguette, torn into chunks
- 1 tablespoon garlic oil (or olive oil, if you prefer)
- 1 tablespoon caraway seeds
- 150g Epoisses cheese, chilled
- 100g Comté cheese, coarsely grated

For the soup

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 100g unsalted butter
- 500g pink onions, finely sliced
- 2 tablespoons plain flour
- 175ml dry white wine
- 1 litre beef stock
- 1 tablespoon onion chutney (optional, but damn good)
- Fine sea salt and coarsely ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 200°C/180°C fan/gas mark 6.

For the croutons, place the torn baguette onto a baking sheet and toss together with the oil and caraway seeds. Bake for 5–10 minutes, or until dry and crispy.

For the soup, heat the oil and butter in a large saucepan or casserole over a high heat. When the butter melts, add the onions and cook for 10 minutes or so, until they are starting to colour around the edges. Once they are gently browned, reduce the heat to low and cook slowly for anything up to 40 minutes. The onions should caramelise deeply, and smell strong and sweet.

When the onions are caramelised, add the flour and stir to coat the onions. Increase the heat to high, wait a minute for the pan to get hot, then pour in the wine and let it bubble and evaporate almost entirely. Add the stock and bring to the boil, then reduce to a simmer and cook for 45 minutes, partially covered. Stir in the chutney, if using, and salt and pepper to taste.

Preheat the grill.

Divide the soup between serving bowls – make sure they're heatproof – then scatter over the croutons. Slice the Epoisses into fairly thin slices (do so quickly before it starts to melt) and lay them on top of the croutons. Scatter over the Comté, and grill until the cheese has melted and burned a little at the edges.