

# Caramelized Onion Soup With Smoked Bacon and Blue Cheese

*This version of French onion soup is puréed and passed through a strainer for a silky-smooth texture, and garnished with bacon and cheese. It's rich, velvety and very comforting. Take the time to caramelize the onions. It's not a quick job, and it takes a whole lot of raw onions to make not a lot of caramelized onions, but it's worth it.*

**Total time** 2 hours

**Serves** 6

**½ cup, plus 1 tablespoon canola oil**

**6 large yellow onions, thinly sliced**

**5 cloves garlic**

**1 sprig thyme**

**2 quarts chicken stock**

**5 slices white bread, crusts cut off and discarded, bread torn into bite-size chunks (2 ½ cups)**

**5 strips thick-cut bacon, cut crosswise into matchsticks about ¼ inch thick (½ cup)**

**Kosher salt**

**Freshly ground black pepper**

**1½ ounces blue cheese, crumbled**

**1.** Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large heavy-bottomed pot over high heat. Once oil is rippling, add onions, stirring to coat, then decrease heat to medium-low and cook, stirring frequently, until onions are a

golden caramel color, about 1 hour.

**2.** Meanwhile, place garlic in a small saucepan and cover with remaining oil. Cook over low heat until lightly toasted and softened, about 40 minutes.

**3.** Add thyme sprig to onions, then add chicken stock. Strain garlic cloves and add them to the stock. Bring to a boil, then decrease heat and simmer 20 minutes. Remove from heat. Add bread to pot and let stand until soft and saturated with liquid, 10 minutes.

**4.** While the bread soaks, cook the bacon: Line a plate with paper towels. Heat a small sauté pan over medium heat. Add bacon and cook slowly, stirring, until it releases its fat and gets crispy and dark red in color, about 10 minutes. Drain on paper towels and set aside.

**5.** Working in batches, purée soup in a blender, starting on low speed and working up to high, until completely smooth. Pass mixture through a fine-mesh strainer and discard solids.

**6.** Season soup with salt and pepper and, if needed, adjust consistency by adding water, 1 tablespoon at a time. Ladle soup into individual bowls and garnish with bacon and blue cheese. Leftover soup, without the garnishes, will keep in an airtight container in the refrigerator up to 3 days.

—Adapted from *"The New Orleans Kitchen"* by Justin Devillier with Jamie Feldmar (Lorena Jones Books)