

LUKAS VOLGER

French Onion Baked Beans

Perfect for a dinner party, perfect for a Tuesday night, perfect for dinner after a long cold hike in the snow. Leftovers are excellent for breakfast, with a poached egg tucked in.

Serves 6 to 8

2 1/2 pounds yellow or white onions (about 4 or 5 medium)
3 tablespoons butter or olive oil
1 teaspoon salt, plus additional as needed
3 bay leaves
5 clove garlic, sliced
1/3 cup whiskey
1 pound white beans, soaked in plenty of water overnight
6 cups rich vegetable stock (see note above)
1 tablespoon vegetable bouillon (such as [Better than Bouillon No-Chicken Base](#))
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
6 or 8 slices rustic French bread (1 slice per person)
About 2 cups shredded or thinly sliced gruyere, Swiss, or other nicely melting cheese

First, slice the onions: Trim off the top and bottom ends, then slice through the core. Peel off the skin, and with each piece laying flat on your cutting board, slice it into strips about 1/4-inch thick. Preheat the oven to 325 F.

Place a Dutch oven or other oven-safe pot that's got a lid over medium-low heat, and when hot, add the butter or olive oil. Add the onions, salt, and bay leaves. Stir, then cover and allow the onions to steam for 15 minutes. Uncover, add the garlic, and continue cooking, stirring periodically, until the onions are nicely caramelized and taste sweet, another 20 to 40 minutes. Reduce the heat if needed to prevent any scorching on the bottom of the pot. Deglaze with the whiskey, stirring with a wooden spoon to scrape up all the browned bits, then stir in the beans, stock, and bouillon. Bring to a simmer, then cover and transfer to the oven.

Cook until the beans are tender! This could take 45 minutes, or 3 hours. Every 30 to 45 minutes, stir and taste to check the progress. Remove from the oven, stir in the vinegar and taste for salt, and leave lidded to keep warm.

Just before serving, rewarm the soup if necessary and prepare the toasts: Preheat the broiler to its high heat setting, and place a rack directly beneath it. Arrange the slices of bread on a baking sheet and then pile the shredded cheese over each one, being generous. Put under the broiler for 2 to 5 minutes, until the cheese is melted and beginning to brown lightly.

Ladle the soup into bowls and top each one with a cheese toast. Serve immediately.