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French Onion Soup

Serves: 6

3 pounds Vidalia onions quartered and thinly sliced (about 6 cups)
1/2 cup butter or margarine
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
¼ cup cabernet sauvignon wine (or cooking sherry with a few splashes of Worcestershire sauce)
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon sugar
3 tablespoons flour, all purpose
3 cups water
3 10 1/2-ounce cans low sodium beef bouillon
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
French bread sliced 3/4 -inch thick for croûtes*
Olive oil
garlic
Grated natural Swiss or Parmesan cheese

Sauté onions in butter or margarine and oil for 20-25 minutes in a large covered saucepan, stirring frequently. After onions start to caramelize, add ¼ cup cabernet sauvignon wine (or cooking sherry with a few splashes of Worcestershire sauce).

Uncover, raise heat, and stir in 1/2 teaspoon salt and sugar. Cook for 30 to 40 minutes, stirring frequently, until onions are a deep golden brown. Sprinkle flour over onions and stir for 3 minutes; blend in water and boiling bouillon.

Simmer, partially covered, for 30 to 40 minutes, skimming if necessary. Pour into bowls; float croûtes in soup and pass cheese separately. (If bowls are ovenproof, sprinkle cheese on croûtes; place bowls under broiler until cheese is golden, about 3 to 5 minutes.)

* Croûtes are similar to croutons, but are larger and are used as part of the dish as well as a garnish. To make croûtes, place slices of French bread cut 3/4 -inch thick on cookie sheet in a preheated 325° oven for 30 minutes or until thoroughly dry and lightly browned. Halfway through baking, baste each side of bread with a teaspoon of olive oil. After baking, rub each slice with a piece of raw garlic. The hard toast acts as a grater.