

# Onions

Onions are the most widely cultivated species in the *Allium* genus. There are many different varieties, from spring to yellow to red to green to shallots, many of which can be used interchangeably. At Cedar Circle Farm, we harvest fresh onions in the spring, scallions through late summer, and shallots, red, and yellow onions in the fall.

Although onions don't have much nutritional value, they do add a unique flavor to your cooking. You can leave them out of a dish and it will still taste okay, but often times, the onion is what really makes the dish exceptional.

### **CULINARY TIPS**

- One large onion equals about 1 cup of chopped onion.
- Use a sharp, straight edge knife to avoid mashing the onion, which releases more of the irritant that stimulates your tear glands. You can also try breathing through your mouth!
- Sauté onions with celery and carrots (2:1:1 ratio) at a low temperature to make mirepoix, a base for stock, soups, and stews.

### **HOW TO STORE**

Store onions away from sunlight in a dark, cold, dry closet or cupboard. Keep them in a mesh bag or loose, in a dry bin or box. When they start sprouting, it's time to compost them.

### **3 WAYS TO PREPARE**

- Caramelize by sautéing in olive oil and butter at a low temperature for about an hour, stirring occasionally. Add balsamic vinegar at the end of the cooking process to deglaze the pan and add extra flavor.
- Pickle in vinegar, salt and sugar. (Best with red onions!)
- Halve and bake at 375°F with olive oil, balsamic, and thyme springs until tender. Serve with a roast.

## FRENCH ONION SOUP

Caramelized onions, savory broth, and melted cheese. This recipe comes from the online version of the indispensable Cook's Illustrated. Their secret is to prepare the onions in the oven, and then deglaze the pot three times. They suggest making the onions up to three days in advance, and the soup a day or two before you serve. You can substitute veggie broth; it may not be quite as full flavored, unless you use a homemade version! Serves 6.

3T unsalted butter, cut into 3 pieces  
6 large yellow onions, halved and cut pole to pole in ¼ in slices  
2 cups water, plus a little extra  
½ cup dry sherry  
4 cups low-sodium chicken broth  
2 cups beef broth  
6 sprigs fresh thyme, tied with kitchen twine  
1 bay leaf  
1 tsp salt  
ground pepper, to taste  
1 small Trukenbrod bread or baguette, cut into ½ in thick slices  
2 ½ cups gruyere cheese or other local cheese of choice, shredded

**For the soup:** Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 400°F. Generously spray inside of heavy-bottomed large (at least 7-quart) Dutch oven with nonstick cooking spray. Place butter in pot and add onions and 1 t salt. Cook, covered, 1 hour. Remove pot from oven and stir onions, scraping bottom and sides of pot. Return pot to oven with lid slightly ajar and continue to cook 1 hour, and then stir. Continue to cook 30 to 45 minutes until onions are very soft and golden brown.

Carefully remove pot from oven and place over medium-high heat. Cook onions, stirring frequently and scraping bottom and sides of pot, until liquid evaporates and onions brown, 15 to 20 minutes. Continue to cook, stirring frequently, until bottom of the pot is coated with dark crust, 6 to 8 minutes, adjusting heat as necessary. Stir in ¼ c water, scraping pot to loosen crust. Cook until water evaporates and another dark crust has formed at the bottom of the pot, 6 to 8 minutes. Repeat process of deglazing 2 or 3 more times, until onions are very dark brown.

Stir in sherry and cook, stirring frequently, until it evaporates, about 5 minutes. Stir in broths, 2 cups water, thyme, bay leaf, and 1/2 tsp salt, scraping up any final bits of browned crust on bottom and sides of pot. Increase heat to high and bring to boil. Reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer 30 minutes. Remove and discard herbs, then season with salt and pepper.

**For the croutons:** While the soup simmers, arrange bread slices in a single layer on a baking sheet and bake at 400°F until bread is dry and crisp with golden edges, about 10 minutes. Set aside.

**To serve:** Adjust oven rack 6 inches from broiler element and heat broiler. Set individual broiler-safe crocks on baking sheet and fill each with soup, leaving some room for the bread. Top each bowl with 1 or 2 baguette slices and sprinkle evenly with gruyère. Broil until cheese is melted and bubbly around the edges, 3 to 5 minutes. Let cool 5 minutes before serving.