

Oooh La La, Onions!

French Author Robert J. Courtine described the onion as “the truffle of the poor.” I’m not certain how many out there have had French truffles before but I would wager that everyone has had onions and that most of you love them as much as I do.

When he made the poor reference I was immediately reminded of my last trip to the “market”, and out of embarrassment for them I will not say which one it was. What is it with tomatoes this time of the year? I found two decent looking specimens that were each the size of a tennis ball. When I got to the counter to pay they rang up at almost \$5. I saw some last night and they were nearly as expensive, hard as a rock and a color that I don’t even know how to describe. Well you can bet I won’t be writing about tomatoes for a while.

But back to the noble onion and all of the delightful things we can do with them. One of my favorite fragrances is onions when you sauté them in olive oil or butter. Forget about those plug in air fresheners, let me have a skillet full of Vidalia’s and I’m a happy camper.

The whole sweet onion craze is really amazing and what started with a small 500 acre parcel of onions in Vidalia, Georgia, has turned into a thriving business with sweets coming from Texas, Hawaii, Washington State, California, South America and Italy, just to name a few sources.

I saw the statistics a while back on one onion dish I’ll warn you about as it is simply off the scale as far as nutritional impact and that is the famous appetizer, The Blooming Onion. This batter-dipped, deep-fried whole onion is served with dipping sauce and has 2,130 calories and 163 grams of fat. The average person needs about 2,000 to 2,500 calories a day. (You’d have to eat 3 or 4 McDonald’s Quarter Pounders just to equal the fat from ½ of this appetizer!)

Two of my favorite dishes with onions are French onion soup and onion pie. Here are some easy recipes that are perfect for winter enjoyment.

Cheesy French Onion Soup

(Serves 4)



- 4 slices French bread
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 3 large Vidalia onions, finely sliced
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 3 10 ³/₄-ounce cans low sodium beef stock
- 1 can beef broth
- 4 tablespoons Parmesan cheese
- 4 slices Swiss or Mozzarella cheese (depending on your preference)

Toast French bread slices. In a large saucepan, melt butter and sauté onions until clear in color. Add flour and stir constantly for 3 minutes. Stir in pepper; add beef stock and beef broth. Bring to a boil, lower heat and simmer for 30 minutes (covered with lid slightly tilted).

When ready to serve, warm bowls slightly. Spoon soup into individual bowls and float one piece of toasted French bread in each. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Cover each bowl completely with Swiss or Mozzarella cheese. Place bowls under broiler until cheese is slightly browned and bubbly. Serve immediately.

The onion pie we are describing can be prepared with great results even if modified to lower the fat content by using fat free sour cream, low fat milk and low fat turkey bacon. The taste is still terrific but not quite as rich.

Zweibel Kuchen (German Onion Pie)

(Serves 8)

- 1 (10 inch) prepared pie crust (Use homemade if you wish.)
- 4 cups peeled, thinly sliced sweet onions
- 3 tablespoons butter or margarine
- ½ cup milk
- 1 ½ cups dairy sour cream, divided
- 1 teaspoon sea salt

2 eggs, well beaten
3 tablespoons all purpose flour
5 slices bacon, cooked, drained & crumbled

Bake your piecrust in a 425°F preheated oven for 10 minutes then set aside. Sauté onions in butter or margarine until transparent and lightly browned. Spoon into piecrust. In a bowl, add milk, 1 ¼ cups sour cream, salt and the well-beaten eggs. Mix, then blend flour with remaining ¼ cup of sour cream.

Combine egg mixture to flour mixture and pour over onions in piecrust. Bake in slow 325°F oven for 30 minutes or until firm in the center. Garnish with 5 slices crumbled, crisp, fried bacon.

This is a great lunch or brunch dish served with a salad or soup on the side. It can be made ahead and reheated at low power in the microwave for your convenience.

Onion dishes take some thought when selecting a good wine to pair well with them but I think you'll find that a lighter styled Riesling, a dryer Gewurztraminer or a fruity, well made Pinot Grigio would fit the bill nicely. The 2004 Elena Walsh Pinot Grigio is a benchmark in that category with complex, beautifully structured fruit and acidity, a clean, citrusy finish and styling that makes it among the finest Pinot Grigio produced in Italy.

The 2000 Rene Mure Alsatian Gewurztraminer is a single vineyard selection from Cote De Rouffach that is a fine example of the best that can be found in that grape from a country that specializes in Gewurztraminer. The wines of Rene Mure are imported by Robert Kacher who is reputed to have a talent for finding the next wave of superstar wines before anyone else can ferret them out.

This beautifully made white has the flowery, spicy nose that marks great Gewurz and an off dry flavor of spicy ripe fruits such as lychee, ripe pears and carambolla. It is clean with lingering spice in the finish.

If we can help with any questions or in locating wines you are looking for call us at 888-288-0668 or visit us on the web at www.winedog.com. Cheers.