

by Barb Kemp

Spring with Onions

Spring food is like starting a good book. It's the beginning of tasty things to follow. I'm often thrown into a conundrum, however, when my host carries out the spring theme by putting flowers in my salad.

I never know what to do with those purple, dainty, blossoms. Are they garnish or am I expected to nibble on their soft little petals?

I like eating flowering plants - as long as they aren't blooming. Take the common cooking onion. It's a flowering bulb. It's a member of the *Allium cepa* family and is related to the lily group. Its cousins include the leek, chive, garlic, and shallot.

Onions add flavour to many dishes, although they do give you something to cry about. It's the gas that's released when onions are cut with a knife. This gaseous sulphuric compound floats into your eyes and triggers the nerve ending of the pain fibre in your cornea. Your brain thinks your eyes are in trouble, which triggers the cascade of tears. The root end of the onion has the highest concentration of these sulphuric compounds. To avoid getting weepy over cut onions you could try looking the other way, or better yet -- wear goggles!

When I cut onions, the smell often follows me around. I'll be driving alone in the car and wonder, "Where is that onion odor coming from?" Like a dog sniffing the wind, I track the source of the scent to my hands. It can be quite unpleasant. A little trick to remove the



smell of onion from your fingers is to rub them with lemon juice. The onion aura magically disappears.

Onions that are slowly cooked become sweetly caramelized. Experience this flavour with this French onion soup recipe. Serve with a large green salad - but hold the flowers!

French Onion Soup

[Serves 4]

- ¼ cup butter
- 5 cups thinly sliced onions
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 3 cups beef broth
- 3 cups chicken broth
- Salt and pepper to taste
- French bread, sliced and toasted
- 1½ cups grated gruyere cheese

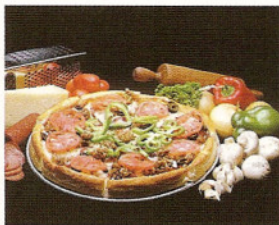
In a medium-large pot melt butter over medium heat. Add onions, sugar and sauté until soft (about 7 minutes.)

Cover and simmer for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove lid and simmer until caramelized about 20 more minutes, stirring occasionally. Sprinkle flour on top and stir 1 minute. Slowly add

beef and chicken broth. Bring to a boil, and then simmer 20 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Place toasted French bread on bottom of soup bowls. Sprinkle Gruyere cheese evenly on top of each toast. Spoon the soup over toast and serve.



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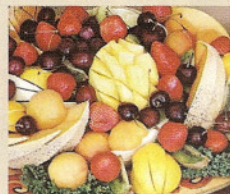


The last five years have been incredible! A very special time. Not only have I had the opportunity to share my food with many customers on the North Shore, but I have also retained many special memories and friendships in the process. The trust I received was a gift from those I have had the pleasure of catering for. For this I thank you all!

My catering translates into a love of food, respect for my customers and the knowledge that I am creating the best possible dishes for their functions. It is a unique combination of imaginative, creative and high quality foods made from the freshest of ingredients. My staff and I specialize in all types of events ranging from weddings, business functions, dinner parties or a simple picnic for two.

It is my goal to remove any intimidation and stress that has a tendency to attach itself to the art of entertaining. I make it easy and I am more than happy to do all the work. My excitement and energy instills a sense of ease in you. The main concern is you and your wishes. I offer courteous, efficient and professional staff, who approach every event with special consideration and understanding, and extend our utmost attention and care. I also make sure that all is tailored to your requirements, tastes and budgets.

My work is complete when you are smiling and satisfied with every personal touch I infuse in the food I create for you.



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