



75 Paris is the capital of France, situated in the north-central part of the country. The present-day city, located along the Seine River some 375 km upstream from the river's mouth on the English Channel. The modern city has spread from the island (the Île de la Cité) and far beyond both banks of the Seine

Paris occupies a central position in the rich agricultural region known as the Paris Basin, and it constitutes one of eight départements of the Île-de-France administrative region. It is by far the country's most important centre of commerce and culture.

The three main parts of historical Paris are defined by the Seine. At its centre is the Île de la Cité, which is the seat of religious and temporal authority. The Seine's Left Bank (Rive Gauche) has traditionally been the seat of intellectual life, and its Right Bank (Rive Droite) contains the heart of the city's economic life, but the distinctions have become blurred in recent decades. The fusion of all these functions at the centre of France and, later, at the centre of an empire, resulted in a tremendously vital environment.

Onion Soup is about as comforting as it gets. The caramelized onion and beef broth is served gratinéed with crusty croutons and a slice of Gruyère cheese on top.

Cheese France offers more than 300 varieties of cheeses, ranging from creamy Brie de Meaux to pungent Munster.

Steak Tartare is a bistro classic that consists of raw minced beef seasoned with capers, onion and black pepper. Traditionally, you'll find it served with a raw egg yolk on top.

Jambon-Beurre is all about the quality of its only three ingredients, parisian ham, butter and, of course, the deliciously crispy baguette that's holding the magic together.

Macaron are possibly the best thing that ever happened to French sweets. Their delicate and airy shells are made of almond flour, and filled with a rich, luscious interior. Popular flavours include pistachio, chocolate, vanilla or raspberry.

Escargots: A national symbol! The Burgundy recipe remains the most popular. The escargots (usually a dozen of them) are presented in their shells and stuffed with a traditional combination of garlic, herbs and butter. Other fillings include Roquefort, truffle, and even curry-based sauces, and so much more.

Croissants Start your day like a true Parisian and get yourself an all-butter croissant for breakfast! These perfectly flaky pastries require time several days!) and a whole set of skills to perfect. Whether you have them with your coffee, orange juice, or on their own, croissants are guaranteed to brighten up your morning!

Onion Soup

This classic French onion soup topped with melted gruyère and parmesan is the epitome of rustic comfort food.

Serves 4 to 6

Ingredients

55 g unsalted butter

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

1.4 kg Vidalia (or sweet) onions (about 5 medium), halved lengthwise and thinly sliced

$\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

$\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon granulated sugar

240 ml dry white wine

2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

1.4l beef broth 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried thyme

2 bay leaves

1 small baguette, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -in slices

1 tablespoon dry sherry

225 g Gruyère cheese, grated (about 2 heaping cups; look for one imported from Switzerland)

50 g grated Parmigiano Reggiano

Method

In a large soup pot, melt the butter over medium heat.

Add the oil, onions, salt, pepper, and sugar.

Cook uncovered, stirring occasionally with a wooden spoon, until onions are deep golden brown and caramelized, 45 to 55 minutes.

N.B. *In the beginning, you will need to stir the onions only occasionally. As they start to brown midway through cooking, you will need to stir them frequently, scraping the fond (the brown particles) from the bottom of the pan. If the onions are browning too quickly, reduce the heat slightly or add a few tablespoons of water to deglaze the pan and continue cooking.*

Add the wine and raise the heat to high.

Cook, stirring with a wooden spoon to scrape any fond from the bottom of the pan, until almost all of the liquid has evaporated and the onions are jammy, 8 to 10 minutes.

Add the flour and cook, stirring constantly, for one minute.

Add the broth, Worcestershire sauce, thyme, and bay leaves to the pot.

Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to a simmer, and cook, covered, for about 30 minutes.

While the soup simmers, preheat the oven to 200°C (fan 180C) and set an oven rack in the middle position.

Arrange the baguette slices in a single layer on a baking sheet and bake until the bread is dry, crisp, and golden at edges, about 10 minutes.

Set aside.

When the soup is finished, remove the bay leaves and add the sherry; taste and adjust seasoning if necessary.

If the soup needs a deeper flavour, try a few shakes of Worcestershire sauce.

If it's not quite sweet enough, add ¼ teaspoon sugar.

Adjust an oven rack 15 cm from grill element and heat stock pot.

Set individual oven-safe crocks on a baking sheet and divide the hot soup among the crocks (be sure the soup is very hot as it won't warm up much in the oven).

Top each crock with 1 or 2 baguette slices (do not overlap slices) and sprinkle evenly with Gruyère and then Parmigiano Reggiano.

Slide the crocks into the oven and grill until the cheese is melted and bubbly around edges, 3 to 5 minutes.

Let the crocks cool for a few minutes before serving.

Alternatively

If using regular soup bowls:

Top each toast slice with some cheese and return to grill to melt, about 2 minutes more.

Divide the soup among bowls and top each serving with two cheese toasts.

Make-Ahead Instructions

The soup can be made and refrigerated up to 3 days ahead (without toasts or cheese), or up to 3 months ahead and frozen. Toasts can be made (without the cheese) and kept sealed at room temperature for up to 3 days.

Escargot Recipe (With & Without Shells)

This escargot recipe is *shockingly easy*. If you're lucky enough to find the escargot shells to stuff them in, that makes for a beautiful presentation, but no worries if you want to make it without shells!

Recipe Origins

It should surprise no one that *escargot* comes from France. Escargot is the French word for snails, so seeing that word on a menu does refer to the French preparation of snails, which is the one in this escargot recipe.

However, snails are eaten in other parts of the world aside from France. It is not uncommon to find snails in other parts of Europe (such as Spain), Southeast Asia, and even in African countries. Interestingly, throughout most of history snails were considered a 'poor man's food' not to be served in fine dining. However, due to the growing popularity of French cooking as the 'mother cuisine,' chefs brought

snails or escargot to the mainstream, even bringing them to now be considered a delicacy.

Ingredients and Substitutions

Escargot - I'm not even sure if you can find these aside from canned versions, but I used the Roland brand of "extra large snails." Most likely, whatever you can find will work

Shells (optional) - This is really mostly for presentation and aesthetic purposes. Omit if necessary.

Garlic - Please, use fresh garlic. I know it takes a while, but this recipe is so simple and the garlic flavour is so important, that using pre-minced garlic just won't taste as good.

Shallot - Finely minced shallot. If you can't get a shallot, I recommend omitting it, as other onions won't work as well.

Good Butter - *GOOD* butter. Preferably French butter, but any European salted butter that is high quality will work.

Parsley - Fresh parsley only, minced into nearly a dust. Chives would be delicious as well, but parsley is preferred.

White Wine. Just a small amount. If necessary, omit or use a squeeze of lemon.

Method

Prepare Ingredients

Remove butter from the fridge and allow it to soften to room temperature.

Open the can of escargot and drain out the liquid.

Allow the escargot to sit in the strainer for a few minutes to remove more liquid.

Meanwhile, peel and finely mince about 10 cloves of garlic.

When you think you've minced it enough, mince it even more. This should take a while.

Finely dice/mince a small shallot as small as you can, but don't macerate the shallot.

Remove parsley leaves from the stems.

Pinch them into a tight stack and slice, then mince until parsley is in "flake" or "dust" texture.

Make the Garlic Butter In a mixing bowl, add softened butter, garlic, shallot, parsley, white wine, salt, and pepper.

Use a rubber spatula to thoroughly mix butter together. An electric mixture could be used for this, but it is absolutely not necessary.

Assemble and Bake

Use a small spoon or a teaspoon measure to scoop out the base layer of butter.

Whether using shells or an escargot plate, add one scoop to the vessel.

Then, top with a drained escargot, then add another scoop on top. You may need to use your fingers to press it down, as the escargot should be covered in butter.

If you are using just a baking dish and no shells or escargot dish, you'll want to use roughly 250ml of garlic butter for 24 snails.

Bake in a 200C (fan 180C) 400° F oven for 10-12 minutes.

The garlic should no longer be raw, and the edges of the butter should begin to brown. Remove from oven and cool slightly, then enjoy.