



VALENTINES DAY MENU

French Onion Soup

Beef Tenderloin Filet with Red Wine Butter Sauce

or

Braised Beef Short Ribs with Port Wine and Chocolate

with

Celery Root Purée or Cauliflower Purée

Pears Poached in Port Wine and Vanilla

or

Salted Caramel Dark Chocolate Mousse

FRENCH ONION SOUP

This recipe is one to learn by heart. I've simplified this French bistro classic into the most straightforward, but well-made and delicious, French onion soup that you'll eat anywhere. Only a handful of quality ingredients and a little bit of time transform the humble onion into a bowl of pure magic.

Prep time: 20 minutes

Cook time: 1 hour and 30 minutes

Serves 6

¼ pound of butter (1 stick)
6 medium yellow onions, sliced
2 teaspoons kosher salt
1 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 cup dry white wine
1 quart beef stock
½ cup dry sherry
½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
2 cups grated Gruyère cheese
2 teaspoons arrowroot to thicken, optional
lemon juice, to taste

INSTRUCTIONS:

In a large saucepan, or dutch oven, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the onions, salt, and pepper and cover the pot with a lid, leaving the lid slightly ajar. Slowly cook down the onions, stirring frequently, about 45 minutes, or until very soft. The onions should melt in your mouth.

Turn up the heat and cook uncovered, stirring frequently for 5-10 minutes, until the onions are golden-brown and caramelized. Add the garlic, cook for one additional minute, then pour in the white wine and stock. Gently simmer for 20 minutes. Then stir in the sherry and simmer for an additional 10 minutes. Adjust the seasoning with additional salt, pepper, and lemon juice to taste.

Note: The soup should taste slightly under-salted. The addition of Parmesan and Gruyère will make it saltier while the lemon juice will balance everything out with a touch of acidity.

Combine 2 teaspoons of arrowroot with a spoonful of broth from the pot in a small bowl and whisk until combined. Slowly whisk the slurry into the soup and simmer ever-so-gently, for 2 minutes, until thickened.

Note: Since we want this broth to have some body to it, we incorporated arrowroot, our favorite gluten-free thickener, to create that luscious mouthfeel we all know and love from a well-made French onion soup.

Just before serving, preheat the broiler and move the top oven rack to the middle position. Place 6 oven-proof soup bowls on a baking sheet and divide the soup evenly. Sprinkle each bowl with Parmesan and Gruyère cheese and place under the broiler until golden and bubbly. Serve immediately.

BEEF TENDERLOIN FILET WITH RED WINE BUTTER SAUCE

This is a simple yet beautiful recipe to prepare for special occasions, dinner parties, or for any night of the week - because you are worth it! The butter sauce made with red wine and shallots makes the classic melt-in-your-mouth, tender filet even more luscious and delicious. I encourage you to experiment using your favorite red wines and make this sauce a masterpiece all your own.

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 30

Serves 6

1 cup red wine

1 cup red wine vinegar

1 shallot, thinly sliced

6 beef tenderloin filets

avocado oil, or choice of fat for high heat cooking

10 ounces cold butter

squeeze of lemon juice

drizzle of honey

Maldon sea salt flakes and freshly ground pepper, to taste

INSTRUCTIONS:

Preheat the oven to 400°F

Boil the wine, vinegar, and shallots in a saucepan over high heat until reduced by ⅓ cup, about 10-15 minutes. Strain the sauce into a bowl and discard the shallots. Return the sauce to the saucepan. Cover and set aside.

Season the beef filets on all sides with salt and pepper. Heat the avocado oil over medium-high heat in 2 medium heavy-bottomed ovenproof skillets large enough to hold 3 filets each. When the oil is very hot, lay the filets in the pans. Sear the steaks on one side for about 3-5 minutes, or until a beautiful golden brown crust forms on the bottom. Turn the filets over and nestle them together in one pan. Transfer the skillet to a preheated oven and roast the fillets for 5 minutes more, or until the internal temperature registers at 125°F for medium rare. Remove the steaks from the oven and let them rest for 5 minutes in the pan (the meat will continue to cook during this time).

Meanwhile, finish the sauce by whisking in the cold butter, one tablespoon at a time, over very low heat until fully combined. Season the sauce with salt and a few drops of lemon juice. Add a tiny drizzle of honey if necessary to balance the flavor.

Baste the steaks with any accumulated beef juices. Pour the remaining juices in with the butter sauce. Spoon the sauce onto individual plates and serve the steaks on top.

BRAISED BEEF SHORT RIBS WITH PORT WINE AND CHOCOLATE

Beef short ribs are one of the most flavorful, tender, delectable cuts of meat on the planet; one of life's greatest pleasures. This recipe starts off like all great braises do. Searing the meat to golden brown perfection while cooking up a rich and flavorful base of herbs and caramelized vegetables. But, boy oh boy, do I have a surprise in store for you. Instead of cooking these gems of meaty deliciousness in your typical red wine and beef stock base, we've added a couple secret ingredients to the mix. Port wine and chocolate. What?!?! The rich and glorious port wine adds a hint of raspberry to the sauce while the bittersweet cocoa powder enhances the flavor of every ingredient in the dish. This is the perfect rainy weekend kind of recipe - a comforting, satisfying, and delicious meal that you and your family will return to again and again!

Prep time: 25 minutes, plus 4 hours or overnight in the fridge

Cook time: 4 hours

Serves 6

6 pounds beef short ribs, bone-in
6 cloves garlic, crushed
1 tablespoon thyme leaves
extra-virgin olive oil
2 large yellow onions, roughly chopped
1 leek, white and pale green parts only, washed and roughly chopped
1 carrot, peeled and roughly chopped
1 parsnip, peeled and roughly chopped
2 plum tomatoes, roughly chopped
¼ cup chopped parsley, plus more for garnish
3 bay leaves
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
2 cups port wine
1 cup red wine
2 cups beef stock, or a little more if needed
1 tablespoon cocoa powder
½ lemon, juiced
2 tablespoons butter
grated zest of ½ orange
kosher salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

INSTRUCTIONS:

In a bowl or plastic bag, combine the short ribs, garlic cloves, thyme leaves, and pepper. Refrigerate for 4-6 hours or overnight. Take the short ribs out of the refrigerator 1 hour before cooking. Reserve the garlic cloves and season the meat generously with salt.

Preheat oven to 425

Heat 3 tablespoons of olive oil in a large dutch oven or braising pan over medium-high heat. When the oil is very hot, add the short ribs to the pan and sear on all sides, in batches, until nicely browned and caramelized, about 15 minutes. Be careful not to burn the pan. Remove the short ribs to a plate and set aside. Discard the oil. Turn the heat down to medium, add fresh oil and onions to the pan. Season with salt and pepper. Sauté the onions while

scraping up all the browned bits from the bottom with a wooden spoon, about 2 minutes.

Add the leeks, carrots, parsnips, and a bit more olive oil to the pan. Season with salt and pepper; cook until soft and lightly caramelized, about 10 minutes. Add the reserved garlic cloves, tomatoes, parsley, and bay leaves, then sauté a few minutes more. Add the balsamic vinegar, port, and red wine and turn the heat up to high. Boil rapidly until the liquid is reduced by half, 10 minutes.

Arrange the short ribs on top of the vegetable wine mixture, bone-side up. Pour enough beef stock into the pan to almost cover the meat. Bring the liquid back up to a simmer, cover the pan with a lid and transfer to the oven. Reduce the oven temperature to 325°F and braise the short ribs for about 3 hours.

Test for doneness by sticking a paring knife into the meat. If the meat offers no resistance and is falling off the bone, it is done. If you're not sure, taste a piece to see if it is melt-in-your-mouth tender.

Transfer the ribs to a serving dish and keep warm. Skim off any fat that rises to the top. For a more refined presentation, strain the liquid into a saucepan, pressing on the solids with a ladle to extract the juices. For a more rustic presentation, serve the sauce as is, with the vegetables.

If the sauce looks thin or watery, reduce it over medium-high heat until thickened. Season the sauce with lemon juice and butter and finish it off by adding up to a tablespoon of cocoa powder, one teaspoon at a time, and tasting along the way, to balance the sweetness of the port. Add more salt and pepper as necessary. Baste the ribs with the sauce.

To serve, drizzle more sauce around the plate and garnish with orange zest and chopped parsley. Decorate with a sprig of thyme if desired.

CAULIFLOWER PURÉE

Mashed potatoes are a timeless classic that everyone adores, but we want you to take a walk on the wild side and whip up a tastier and more nutritious version of this classic comfort dish! To make it super simple, you can boil your vegetables in water like everyone else, but if you want to amp up the yum, opt to cook your veggies in a combo of milk and chicken stock for a burst of deep flavor and silky texture you just can't get any other way. Top it off with the lush, creamy tang of crème fraîche and savory Parmesan and you've got a great dish perfect for any occasion.

Prep time: 20 minutes

Cook time: 20 minutes

Serves 6

3 ½ pounds celery root, or a combo of celery root and potatoes, parsnips, rutabaga and/or apples, peeled and diced to a 1 inch cube

2 cups whole milk or water

2 cups chicken stock or additional milk or water

1 bay leaf

1 teaspoon kosher salt

3 garlic cloves, peeled and trimmed

3 tablespoons butter

½ cup crème fraîche or sour cream

¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese

INSTRUCTIONS:

Warm the milk, chicken stock, bay leaf, and salt over low heat in a large saucepan.

Peel the vegetables and dice into 1 inch cubes. Add the vegetables to the saucepan and a bit more milk, stock, or water if necessary, until the vegetables are completely covered. Cover the pan and gently simmer for about 20 minutes, or until the vegetables are completely tender. A knife inserted into each cube should meet no resistance.

Drain the vegetables, discard the bay leaf, and purée using a food processor, food mill, potato ricer, or masher. Add the butter, crème fraîche, and Parmesan cheese to combine. Taste and adjust seasoning with more salt if necessary.

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Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 15 minutes

Serves 4 to 6

1 head cauliflower, about 2 ½ pounds

2 tablespoons butter

½ cup cream cheese

1 teaspoon onion powder

3 tablespoons prepared horseradish

1 teaspoon kosher salt

INSTRUCTIONS:

To prepare the cauliflower, remove the leaves, cut out the core, and break the cauliflower down into 1½ inch pieces. Steam or boil for 10-15 minutes, or until the cauliflower pieces are soft and tender when pierced with a knife.

Transfer the cauliflower to a food processor and add the remaining ingredients. Purée until smooth, stopping to scrape and stir the purée as needed. Adjust the seasoning to taste; serve hot.

PEARS POACHED IN PORT WINE AND VANILLA

Stunning. That's what you'll say when you plate these beauties! Pears cooked simply in port wine make for a beautiful and delicious fruit dessert. I love using port for this recipe because of its raspberry, blackberry, caramel, cinnamon, and chocolate notes that absorb into the pears while cooking. I also add a hint of vanilla and almond to the poaching liquid to bring all of these amazing flavors together. Serving these sweet and juicy pears with a scoop of vanilla ice cream or lightly whipped cream is a must!

Prep time: 15 minutes

Cook time: 30 minutes

Serves 6

8 firm but ripe Bosc pears
4 cups ruby port
¼ cup lemon juice
a few drops of almond extract, optional
1 vanilla bean, or ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

INSTRUCTIONS:

Serve with vanilla ice cream or lightly sweetened whipped cream.

To core the pears, use a melon baller or the oval end of a potato peeler and dig in from the bottom, removing the core and seeds. Peel the pears.

In a heavy-bottomed saucepan, roomy enough to hold the pears in one layer, combine the pears, port, lemon juice, almond extract, and enough water to just cover the pears by ½ inch.

Split the vanilla bean lengthwise and scrape out the seeds and pulp with a paring knife. Add the seeds, pulp, and bean to the pot.

Bring the liquid to a boil, then reduce to a simmer. Place a heatproof plate on top of the pears to submerge and cook gently until they are tender when pierced with a knife, about 15-20 minutes. Remove the pears from the poaching liquid and set aside.

Boil the poaching liquid over high heat, uncovered, reducing the liquid until thick and syrupy, about 10-15 minutes. This port reduction should coat the back of a spoon.

Plate the pears individually or on a large serving dish and drizzle the port sauce on and around the pears. Serve with vanilla ice cream or lightly sweetened whipped cream.

Note: These pears are wonderful served warm or cold. They can be made ahead and stored in their poaching liquid for up to 3 days before serving. Making the pears ahead of time is actually preferred as they will soak up more of the port flavor. Make sure to cool the poaching liquid before putting the pears back in, so they don't continue to cook.

SALTED CARAMEL DARK CHOCOLATE MOUSSE

Dark chocolate and espresso add slightly bitter notes to balance the sweet, creamy, buttery, salted caramel in this decadent chocolate mousse. I used maple syrup instead of sugar to give the chocolate a slight toffee flavor, and since the combination of sweet and salty will never go out of style, I sprinkled on a few flakes of Maldon sea salt to bring all of these amazing flavors together.

Prep time: 5 minutes, plus 8 hours chill time in the fridge

Cook time: 15 minutes

Serves 6

¼ cup maple syrup

3 tablespoons butter, cubed

¾ cup heavy cream

6 ounces 72% dark chocolate

1 tablespoon instant espresso dissolved in 2 tablespoons hot water

4 large eggs, separated

¼ teaspoon Maldon sea salt flakes, plus more for garnish

INSTRUCTIONS:

Warm the maple syrup in a small saucepan over medium heat. Allow the syrup to simmer and increase in temperature to 240°F on a meat or candy thermometer. Remove from heat and carefully whisk in the butter until melted. Then whisk in the cream and stir until smooth.

Add the chocolate and espresso and wait a few minutes for the chocolate to melt. Then gently stir the mixture until smooth and well combined. Set aside to bring to room temperature. When cool, whisk in the egg yolks and flaky sea salt.

In a separate bowl, whip the egg whites until stiff. Fold one third of the egg whites into the chocolate mixture to lighten it. Fold in the rest until combined. Divide the mousse into 6 serving glasses, or spoon into your favorite serving dish and chill in the refrigerator for at least 8 hours.

Serve with a drizzle of salted caramel and a sprinkle of Maldon sea salt flakes on top.

Connect with me!

Rina Thoma

Chef | Best-Selling Author

Email: rina.thoma@gmail.com

Website: www.ladolcerina.com

Instagram: [la_dolce_rina](https://www.instagram.com/la_dolce_rina)

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