



In the Kitchen

with Barb Agee

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Anything-but-Ordinary Onions

The mighty onion may rarely be the star of the show, but it gets the prize for being the best player in a supporting role in many dishes. Throughout history in cultures that used onions in their cuisine, they were recognized for their healing powers. Onions are low in calories and high in some vitamins and minerals.

Provençal Sweet and Sour Onions

One 14-ounce package frozen pearl onions	¼ cup balsamic vinegar
2 tablespoons butter, divided	¼ cup dry red wine
1 tablespoon olive oil	1 cup chicken broth
1 tablespoon tomato paste	¼ cup raisins
1 tablespoon brown sugar	

Melt 1 tablespoon butter and olive oil in a heavy saucepan. Blend in tomato paste and brown sugar. Add balsamic vinegar, wine and chicken broth and stir together. Add onions and raisins. Bring to a boil and reduce heat to simmer gently uncovered for 35 minutes or until onions are tender and most of the liquid has evaporated. Stir in 1 tablespoon butter. Serve hot or at room temperature. *Serves 6*

Watercress Salad with Strawberries and Red Onions

1 medium red onion*	Dressing
3 bunches watercress, thick stems discarded	½ cup sliced strawberries
1 pint fresh strawberries, stemmed and sliced	¼ cup finely chopped shallot
1 tablespoon minced fennel fronds	¼ cup white balsamic vinegar
Kosher salt and fresh ground black pepper	⅓ cup olive oil

Prepare red onion; , thinly slice into half-moons and separate into half rings

In a large salad bowl, toss together watercress, strawberries and onion rings. Drizzle dressing over greens and toss. Season with salt, pepper and fennel fronds.

In a blender, add strawberries and shallot. Blend to a liquefied state. Pour into a bowl. Whisk in balsamic vinegar. Gradually add olive oil, whisking vigorously.

*may use sweet onion such a Vidalia, Walla Walla or Maui

Spiced Red Lentils with Caramelized Onions and Spinach

3 tablespoons butter, divided
½ large onion, halved and cut into thin half-moons
Kosher salt
1 cup red lentils, rinsed well and drained
2 bay leaves
1 small Serrano chile, minced
2 teaspoons fresh ginger, grated
1 teaspoon ground coriander
1 teaspoon turmeric
One 10-ounce bunch spinach
½ teaspoon cumin seeds
2 large garlic cloves, minced
4 cups cooked brown basmati rice or couscous

Prepare spinach; remove stems and cut leaves in half

Heat 2 tablespoons butter over medium heat in a large skillet. Add onions and a pinch of salt; cook, stirring occasionally, until browned and very soft with crispy edges, about 30 minutes. Set aside.

Meanwhile, put lentils in a saucepan with 2 ½ cups water and the bay leaves. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, uncovered, and skim off foam. Simmer just until tender, 5 to 10 minutes. Remove bay leaves, drain and set lentils aside.

Stir chile, ginger, coriander, turmeric and 1 teaspoon salt into pan of onions and cook over medium heat until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add spinach and cook, stirring occasionally, until just wilted. Stir onion-spinach mixture into lentils. Wipe skillet clean.

Heat 1 tablespoon of butter in skillet over medium heat. Add cumin seeds and garlic and cook, stirring until seeds are sizzling, about 1 minute. Add to lentils. Serve lentils over cooked rice. *Serves 4*

Onion, Potato and Spinach Gratin

4 Yukon potatoes
1¼ cup cream
1 tablespoon horseradish
2 tablespoons garlic, minced
1 cup Gruyere cheese, grated
Kosher salt and fresh ground pepper
3 medium sweet onions
2 cups 2% milk
2 bay leaves
1 tablespoon olive oil
3 strips lean bacon, chopped
1 bunch spinach, coarsely chopped

Preheat oven to 375°F.

Place whole, unpeeled onions in a large pot. Add milk, bay leaves, a pinch of salt and enough water to cover onions. Bring to a boil; turn heat down to simmer for 10 minutes. Remove onions from heat and let them cool in liquid. When cooled, remove onions from milk and peel. Coarsely chop onions.

Peel and thinly slice the potatoes; place evenly in a covered baking dish. In a small bowl mix together cream, horseradish, garlic, and 1 teaspoon each salt and pepper. Pour evenly over potatoes. Cover and bake for 25 minutes. Remove from oven and stir in cheese. Set aside.

In a skillet, add olive oil and bacon. Brown bacon until crisp, then add chopped onions and sauté for 3 minutes. Add spinach and sauté until wilted, 1 to 2 minutes.

Spread onion mixture evenly in a large baking dish. Spoon potato mixture over the top and bake for 15 minutes, until bubbly hot. *Serves 8*



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