French Onion Soup

INGREDIENTS:

SERVES 4-6

- *4 medium yellow onions*
- *5 tablespoons unsalted butter*
- *2 cloves of garlic*
- *1 fresh bay leaf or 3 dry*
- *2 sprigs fresh thyme or 1½ teaspoon dry*
- *1 cup red wine*
- *3 tablespoons all purpose flour*
- *2 quarts beef or chicken broth*
- *Salt and pepper to taste*
- *8 or so slices of baguette bread*
- *½ cup grated gruyere cheese*

DIRECTIONS:

1. Take the tops and bottoms off the onions, cut them in half through the root and top and peel off the outer papery skins. Slice the onions into ¼ inch julienne (half moons) and set them aside. Melt all but 1 tablespoon of the butter in a heavy-bottomed skillet over medium-high heat and when the foam subsides add the sliced onions, distribute them over the bottom of the pan. Do not stir the onions at first, rather allow them to caramelize and get a golden-brown color where they contact the bottom of the skillet. After the first 5 minutes of cooking, stir the onions and allow the same color to be achieved on a new section of the sliced onions. Continue to cook them like this until they are all golden brown, soft and sweet, about 25 minutes. You may need to stir more often as the caramelization process happens in order to prevent excessive charring of the onions.

2. At the end of this process, finely chop the garlic and add it to the cooking onions along with the bay leaf and thyme. Deglaze your onions, garlic and herbs in the skillet with the red wine and simmer to "cook out" the wine, it is done when you can no longer smell alcohol fumes rising from the pan. Lower the heat to medium and sprinkle the flour in the mixture, continue to stir and cook it for about 5 minutes to get rid of the raw flour flavor. Add the meat broth and bring it all back to a simmer, cook for 10 minutes and season to taste with salt and pepper. Remove the bay leaves and thyme sprigs (if using fresh thyme).

3. Preheat the broiler of the oven and place the rack in the second from top position. Arrange the baguette slices on a baking sheet and rub each slice with a little of the remaining tablespoon of butter; toast the bread lightly. Remove the sheet from the oven and top each slice of bread with grated gruyere cheese. Broil the croutons again until the cheese is melted and the corners of the bread are golden.

4. Ladle the soup into serving bowls and float one or two croutons on top of the soup. Serve immédiatment!

COOKING SKILLS ACADEMY

Monte Cristo Sandwich

INGREDIENTS:

- *6 slices white bread*
- *4 tablespoons mayonnaise*
- *4 slices swiss cheese*
- *4 slices ham*
- *2 teaspoons yellow mustard optional*
- *4 slices turkey*
- *1/2 cup milk*
- *4 eggs*
- *4 tablespoons butter*
- *2 tablespoons powdered sugar optional*

DIRECTIONS:

1. Place 2 slices of bread on a cutting board. Spread mayonnaise on each slice of bread. Top with a slice of cheese, and 2 slices of ham. Add the second slice of bread and spread with a little bit of mustard if desired. Add 2 slices of turkey and a slice of cheese. Add the 3rd piece of bread.

2. Using a cutting board or the bottom of a frying pan, gently press the sandwich. Cut off crusts (to help seal the sandwich).

3. In a small bowl mix together milk, eggs and salt & pepper until combined. Dip sandwich into egg mixture.

4. Preheat skillet over low heat and add butter. Add sandwich and cook 4-6 minutes. Flip and cook 4-5 minutes more or until cooked through and melted.

5. Dust with powdered sugar if using. Serve warm with strawberry jam.

COOKING SKILLS ACADEMY

Steak au Poivre

INGREDIENTS:

SERVES 4

- *4 tenderloin steaks, 6 to 8 ounces each and no more than 1 1/2 inches thick*
- *Kosher salt*
- *2 tablespoons whole peppercorns*
- *1 tablespoon unsalted butter*
- *1 teaspoon olive oil*
- *1/3 cup Cognac, plus 1 teaspoon*
- *1 cup heavy cream*

DIRECTIONS:

1. Remove the steaks from the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes and up to 1 hour prior to cooking. Sprinkle all sides with salt.

2. Coarsely crush the peppercorns with a mortar and pestle, the bottom of a cast iron skillet, or using a mallet and pie pan. Spread the peppercorns evenly onto a plate. Press the fillets, on both sides, into the pepper until it coats the surface. Set aside.

3. In a medium skillet over medium heat, melt the butter and olive oil. As soon as the butter and oil begin to turn golden and smoke, gently place the steaks in the pan. For medium-rare, cook for 4 minutes on each side. Once done, remove the steaks to a plate, tent with foil and set aside. Pour off the excess fat but do not wipe or scrape the pan clean.

4. Off of the heat, add 1/3 cup Cognac to the pan and carefully ignite the alcohol with a long match or firestick. Gently shake pan until the flames die. Return the pan to medium heat and add the cream. Bring the mixture to a boil and whisk until the sauce coats the back of a spoon, approximately 5 to 6 minutes. Add the teaspoon of Cognac and season, to taste, with salt. Add the steaks back to the pan, spoon the sauce over, and serve.

COOKING SKILLS ACADEMY