

New-School French Onion Dip

By Sarah Coates

There is no denying that homemade usually tastes better than store-bought. And lucky for us, this is definitely one of those times. It's no surprise to me that sliced red onions, slowly cooked down with thyme, olive oil, a little sugar and white wine until they reach a dark caramelized jam taste better than a packet dehydrated who-knows-what. And it's also no surprise to me that good quality cream cheese and sour cream whipped together in front of my eyes tastes better than whatever stabilizers and thickening agents have gone into a tub of store-bought French Onion. Once the creamy base and the dark sticky onions come together, it's game over. I'm sorry, but that plastic tub never stood a chance. Homemade's got it beat hands-down.

Makes about 2 cups For the onion jam::

- 2 large red onions
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Salt
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme leaves
- 2 teaspoons granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup white wine or dry vermouth

For the dip::

- 12 ounces cream cheese at room temperature
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1/2 cup fried shallots, optional, to garnish (these can be found in the asian food section of your supermarket)

1. First, make the onion jam. Peel and slice the onions into fine half-moons. Place them into a wide heavy-based pan, along with the olive oil, and sweat over a medium-low heat until they begin to caramelize and brown, about 15 minutes.
2. Add the thyme leaves and granulated sugar to the pan, and cook for another 3 to 4 minutes, until the sugar is melted and the onions are well caramelized.
3. Pour the white wine or vermouth into the pan, and working quickly, stir and scrape any sticky, browned bits from the bottom of the pan. Keep stirring and scraping until the pan is basically clean, and the liquid has completely evaporated. Turn off the heat, and set aside to cool. (If packed into a sterilized jar, this mixture can be kept in the fridge for up to a week)
4. To make the dip, beat the cream cheese (either with a wooden spoon or with an electric mixer) until it is completely smooth. Add the sour cream and beat again until smooth, thick and combined.
5. At this point, you can either add the cooled onion jam and mix the two together, or do as I like to do, and serve the smooth, creamy dip spread out on a plate, and topped with a tangle of onions. Either way, sprinkle with the crisp fried shallots and serve!