

SHARING

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Larsen draws on her husband's AV background to make it as enjoyable for students as possible.

For the culinary classes she's currently teaching for Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, she has four cameras in her Shaler kitchen. Speaker view allows participants to see exactly what she's doing at all times. While the class itself is muted — "my kitchen is really noisy," she says — a moderator reads questions from the chat function.

"It was an adjustment, but I love it and people really seem to like it," says Larsen, who also runs the Food Program at Providence Connections Family Support Center.

FRENCH ONION SOUP

French onion soup is a winter classic. It features a richly flavored beef broth with slow-cooked caramelized onions and nutty, cheesy Gruyere croutons on top. It's an indulgence, but a fairly inexpensive and easy one. You might even call it a certain cure for a cold and dreary winter day.

- 4 yellow onions
2 cloves garlic
1/2 cup butter
2 bay leaves
1 teaspoon thyme
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper
2 cups red wine
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
6 cups beef broth
2 tablespoons
Worcestershire sauce
1 French baguette
8 ounces Gruyere or Swiss cheese
3 sprigs fresh thyme
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Thinly slice the onions and mince the garlic. Melt the butter in a large pot over medium-low heat. Add onions, garlic, bay leaves, thyme and salt and pep-

per and cook until the onions are very soft and caramelized, about 25 minutes.

Add wine, and bring to a boil while scraping the bottom of the pot to release any brown bits that may have accumulated. Reduce heat and simmer until the wine has evaporated and the onions are dry, about 5 minutes. Discard bay leaves.

Dust the onions with flour and give them a stir. Turn the heat down to medium low so the flour doesn't burn, and cook for 5 minutes to cook out the raw flour taste. Now add the beef broth and Worcestershire sauce. Bring the soup back to a simmer, and cook for 10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

Preheat your broiler on high. Shred the Gruyere or Swiss cheese and slice the baguette. Arrange the baguette slices on a baking sheet in a single layer. Sprinkle the slice with the cheese and broil until bubbly and golden brown 3-5 minutes.

Ladle the soup into bowls and float cheese croutons on top. Sprinkle on the fresh thyme. Serve immediately.

Serves 8.

LOBSTER BISQUE

Luscious and just a bit deca-

dent, lobster bisque is a perfect starter for an elegant holiday meal. It's usually made with a stock of lobster shell, which can be intimidating for some home cooks. But it shouldn't be, says Emily Larsen of Spilling the Soup, who created this recipe for a winter soups cooking class at Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens.

To make the process easier, she offers these tips. Purchase your lobster no more than 48 hours before you plan on cooking it, and store it in the refrigerator. If your fridge has a meat or crisper drawer, that's a great place.

When you're ready to make the soup, put live lobsters in the freezer 15-30 minutes before cooking. This sedates them so they won't thrash about. Also, leave the bands on the claws when cooking. Those rubber bands won't affect the taste or quality and leaving them on will lead to a calmer

experience, she says.

Not your cup of tea? You also can make the recipe with lobster tails, or ask your fishmonger to steam the lobsters for you and simply pick the meat.

Kosher salt
1 whole (1 1/2 pounds) live lobster, or 2 lobster tails
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 carrot, chopped
2 stalks celery, chopped
1 yellow onion, chopped
2 cloves garlic
3 tablespoons tomato paste
1 cup sherry
2 cups seafood stock
4 tablespoons butter, divided
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 cup heavy cream
3 sprigs fresh thyme
3 sprigs fresh tarragon, chopped, optional
Oyster crackers, optional, for serving

Prepare lobster: Fill a large

pot with 1 1/2 inches of water. Stir in 2 teaspoons kosher salt and bring the water to a boil. Add lobster, cover with a tight-fitting lid and return the water to a boil.

Once boiling, lower heat to a gentle boil and steam the lobster until it is bright red, about 12 minutes (6 minutes if using lobster tails). Remove lobster, reserving liquid. When lobster has cooled slightly, place in a bowl and remove the meat from the claws and tail, again reserving any liquid that comes out of the shells. Chop meat and refrigerate. Reserve the shell pieces and legs, discarding the head and body.

Swirl olive oil in a large pot over medium heat, then add carrots, celery and onions. Sweat until the onions are translucent, about 5 minutes, then increase the heat to medium-high and add the garlic. Then add lobster shells and remains.

Saute for 5-6 minutes, add tomato paste and cook for an additional 3-4 minutes. Add sherry and cook for 5 minutes, until the alcohol has evaporated. Add seafood stock to the pot and simmer for 20 minutes. Strain the broth to remove all solids.

Melt 2 tablespoons butter in a pot. Add flour and mix well to form a paste. Continue to cook for 3 minutes. Whisk in the lobster stock. Bring to a boil until thickened and then reduce to a simmer.

Heat remaining 2 tablespoons butter in a separate skillet over medium-low heat. Gently saute the lobster meat until warmed through. Whisk heavy cream into the soup along with thyme leaves and tarragon, if using.

Spoon bisque into a bowl and top with lobster meat. The bisque is traditionally served with oyster crackers.

Serves 6.

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