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Gruyere with Caramelized Onions

This is one of Tom's Favorites, one that showcases how a sandwich can be adapted from a meal. The meal here is French onion soup. Whereas in the soup the onion is the star, with the crouton and cheese to support it, in the sandwich we flip that: the onions serve as the relish. We roast the onions very slowly, caramelizing them, until dark golden brown to balance the assertive and pungent Gruyere. With the rye bread to hint at the Alsatian origin of the soup, we end with something rustic and homey, and yet something that, unlike soup, can be enjoyed while walking down the street. Makes 4 sandwiches

16 slices Gruyere cheese
8 slices rye bread
1 cup Roasted Onions (see below)

Preheat a sandwich press according to the manufacturer's specifications. Place 2 slices of cheese on each of 4 slices of bread. Follow with a generous amount of onions and the other 2 slices of cheese. Close the sandwiches and place in the sandwich press (no need to butter the press or the bread). Close the lid and apply slight pressure. Cook without disturbing for 5 to 8 minutes. Open the press and check for color and temperature; the cheese should be melted and the bread golden. If the bread is sticking to the press, allow it to cook for a bit longer and it will unstick itself. If the press seems to generate more heat on the bottom, flip the sandwich halfway through to ensure even cooking (making sure the ridges in the bread line up). Once cooked, remove, cut into halves, and serve.

Roasted Onions

4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
4 medium yellow onions, halved and cut lengthwise into 1/8-inch slices
2 tablespoons chopped fresh oregano, or 1 tablespoon dried Sicilian oregano
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

In a skillet over medium-high heat, add the olive oil and onions and stir vigorously to avoid scorching. Add the oregano and season with salt and pepper. Continue stirring until the onions have a deep brown color. Reduce the heat and continue to cook until the onions are soft, 30 to 45 minutes. Use immediately or refrigerate for up to 1 week. Makes 2 cups.