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by Liz Robb

A simple and tasty first course, with soft baked Goats cheese on caramelised

balsamic onions atop a crisp crostini, accompanied by thyme roasted baby beetroot wedges.

Ingredients

400g small fresh beetroot
Olive oil
A few sprigs of fresh thyme
Salt and black pepper
2-3 medium onions*
A large knob of butter
2 tablespoons of balsamic vinegar
2 teaspoons of demerara sugar
2 small round Goats cheeses [130-150g each]
1 small baguette
Rocket and watercress
Servings
4
Person

Preparation

1. Heat the oven to 200 degrees or 180 degrees fan oven.
2. Peel the beetroot and cut into wedges. Warm 2-3 tablespoons of olive oil in a roasting tin in the oven, then place the beetroot in the tin. Pull thyme leaves from 2 or 3 stalks and sprinkle into the tin, then toss the beetroot in the oil and thyme.
3. Season with salt and black pepper and then bake for 45-50 minutes, or until the beetroot is tender with slightly blackened edges.
4. Meanwhile, peel, halve and finely slice the onions. Heat a tablespoon of olive oil and a large knob of butter in a small pan and saute the onions, stirring occasionally, for about 10 minutes, or until the onions are soft.
5. Stir in the balsamic vinegar, the sugar and a little salt, and then turn the heat down really low. Continue to cook for 25-30 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the onions are really caramelised. Add more seasoning and balsamic if necessary.
6. Before the beetroot and onions are ready, halve the cheeses horizontally to make 4 equal pieces, and then place them cut side down in a very small lightly oiled roasting tin, so that they don't spread too far when baking.
7. Brush the cheeses with a little olive oil and then bake for about 20 minutes, at the same temperature as the beetroot, until the cheeses are still firm outside but soft and warm in the middle.
8. For the crostini, cut 4 fairly thick slices from the roundest part of the baguette. Brush both sides lightly with olive oil and bake on a small oven tray for 7-8 minutes, or until they are crisp and turning brown.
9. Arrange rocket and watercress in a small circle on each plate. Place a crostini on top of this, add a quarter of the caramelised onion and top with a hot Goats cheese, garnished with a little chopped thyme. Serve with a portion of roasted beetroot.

Cooks Note

White or red onions work equally well here.

You may wish to toss the rocket and watercress in a little salad dressing before serving.