

## Onion soup with Reypenaer VSOP gratin

No other winter dish is more evocative than a piping hot onion soup for Sunday lunch after a brisk walk. We think, though, that you can serve this soup at any time of the year. For instance, use spring onions instead of ordinary onions, or why not add cubes of cooked ham instead of bacon. You can use all different kinds of onions such as shallots or red onions. But what give this onion soup its typical rustic appearance are the slices of French bread sprinkled generously with grated Reypenaer VSOP, which are then popped under the grill until golden.

### **Ingredients for 8 large hearty soup bowls:**

- 10 onions
- 1 piece of mace
- butter
- 150 g smoked bacon lardons
- 1 litre chicken stock
- 200 g grated Reypenaer VSOP
- 2 sprigs thyme
- 12 thin slices French bread (1 day old)
- 2 bay leaves
- freshly ground black pepper
- 2 cloves
- sea salt

Peel the onions and slice into half-rings. melt the butter in a large saucepan until it begins to colour, then add the onion and the bacon lardons. Fry over a good heat so that the onions begin to caramelize, then add the stock and the herbs. Leave to simmer for 45 minutes, remove the herbs and season the soup to taste with freshly ground black pepper and salt. Ladle the soup into ovenproof bowls, place three slices of French bread on top and sprinkle generously with the grated Reypenaer VSOP. Place under the grill in the oven that has been preheated to 180°C and grill the bread and cheese until golden brown. Serve immediately.

