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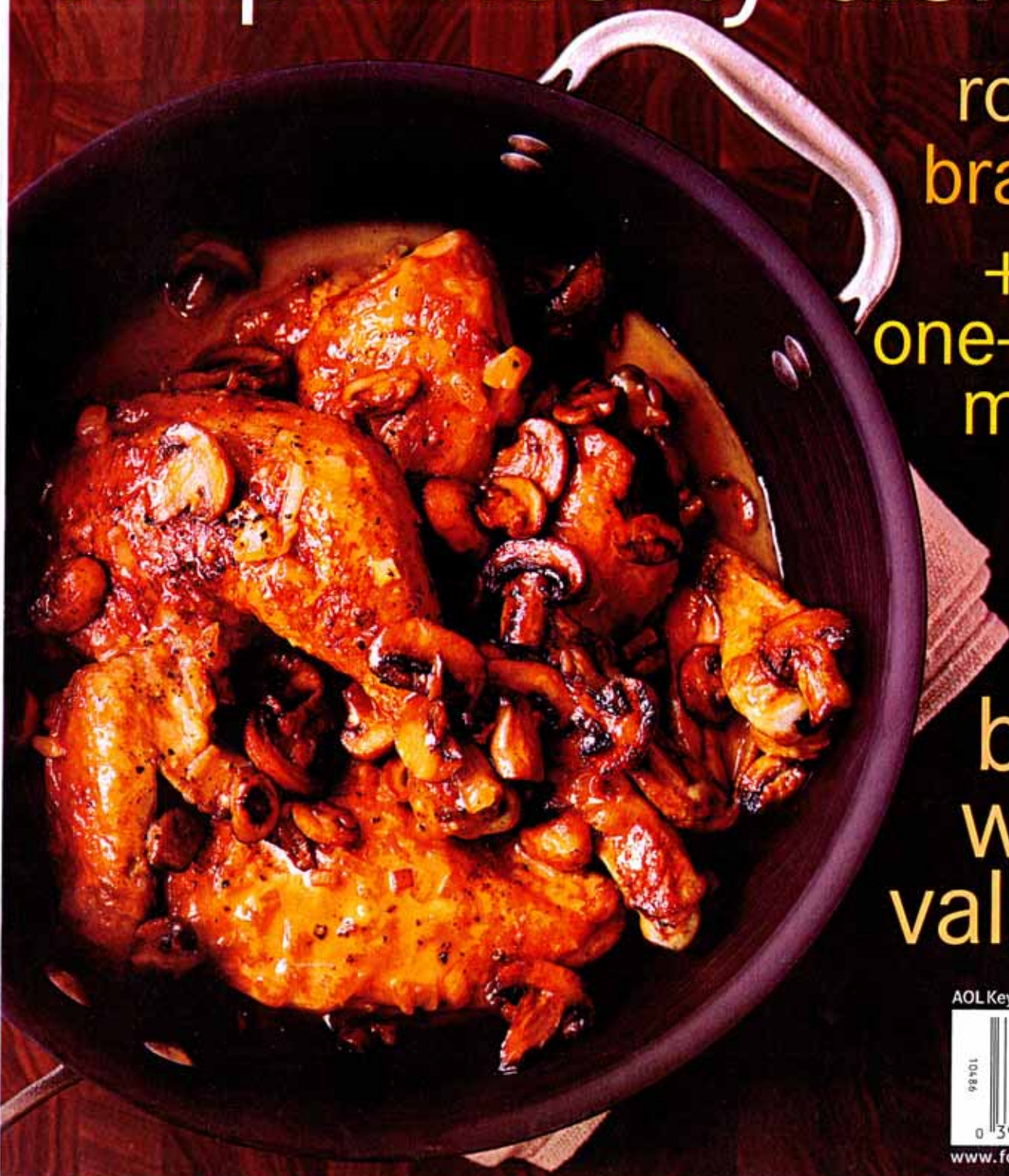
FOOD & WINE

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recipe rescue cheese

Irma R., a novice home cook, turns to F&W's Tina Ujlaki with her kitchen questions. This month the topic is cheese: how to make simple, no-fail fondues and soufflés in 30 minutes or less.

QUESTION

Dear Tina,
I'm a fondue failure. Whenever I try to make it, I end up with a stringy, gloppy mess. Help! —Irma

ANSWER

Dear Irma,
Maybe you add the cheese too quickly; maybe you use too much cornstarch; maybe there isn't enough acid in the wine you cook with. Or perhaps you don't have a good recipe! To get a great one, I phoned Terrance Brennan, of Artisanal in New York City. You can make the recipe below with cheeses other than the ones suggested, but don't use blues (they'll overpower the others), goats (they don't melt nicely) or dry, aged Parmesan-like cheeses (they remain grainy) here. And remember, the best way to swirl your bread in the fondue is in a figure 8! —Tina

Artisanal's Cheese Fondue

TOTAL: 20 MIN

6 SERVINGS

- 1 garlic clove, halved
- 1 cup Sauvignon Blanc
- 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- $\frac{3}{4}$ pound rindless Emmentaler, Gruyère, Beaufort, Comté and Appenzeller, coarsely shredded
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch

Salt and freshly ground pepper

Vigorously rub the garlic clove all over the inside of a fondue pot or medium saucepan; discard the garlic. Add the

wine and lemon juice to the saucepan and bring to a boil. In a bowl, toss the shredded cheese with the cornstarch. When the wine boils, gradually add the cheese by the handful, whisking constantly until it is fully melted before adding more. Once all of the cheese has been incorporated, simmer the fondue over moderate heat for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from the heat and season with salt and pepper. Serve hot, with cubes of crusty peasant bread, boiled fingerling potatoes, cornichons or sautéed beef tips.

QUESTION

Dear Tina,
Wow! That fondue was amazing. On to my next cheese obsession—soufflés. Mine never rise, and they're always bland. What can I do? —Irma

ANSWER

Dear Irma,
You could always add another beaten egg white, but it really doesn't matter if your soufflé doesn't reach the sky: In fact, my family loves a flatter soufflé, which has more crust. Blandness is easy to fix—just taste the soufflé base before adding the eggs and be sure it's seasoned highly, with tasty cheese, a bit of mustard or simply salt and pepper. I use all the odds and ends in my cheese bin—but avoid mozzarella, which gets stringy.

I serve this soufflé straight from the baking dish, with a salad or steak. I think (I hope) this recipe will make you happy, Irma. —Tina

Fallen Cheese Soufflé

ACTIVE: 10 MIN; TOTAL: 30 MIN

6 SIDE-DISH SERVINGS

This is a very forgiving recipe. You can make it with almost any cheese except highly processed ones. The milder the cheese, the more you'll need.

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups milk

- 1 to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups coarsely chopped, crumbled or shredded cheese
- Dijon mustard (optional)
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 6 large eggs, separated
- Freshly grated Parmesan cheese

1. Preheat the oven to 400°. Butter an 8-by-12-inch glass or ceramic baking dish. In a medium saucepan, melt the butter over moderate heat. Add the flour and whisk until blended and bubbling. Gradually whisk in the milk and bring to a boil, whisking constantly; simmer for 3 minutes. Gradually whisk in the cheese until melted. Add mustard if desired and season generously with salt and pepper. Whisk in the egg yolks.
2. In a bowl, beat the egg whites until firm. Whisk half of the whites into the soufflé base, then fold the base into the remaining whites. Pour the mixture into the baking dish and sprinkle with Parmesan. Bake for 20 minutes, or until browned and puffed. Serve hot. ■