

BAKED FONTINA

with Garlic, Olive Oil, and Thyme

SERVES 4

This is a streamlined, simplified version of fondue without the fondue pot; without the cans of Sterno; and without the wine, cornstarch, or other supporting ingredients. You just take some cubed Fontina cheese, top it with slivered garlic, thyme leaves, and olive oil, and broil until it's melted and bubbly enough to scoop up with hunks of bread. It's a great appetizer, and paired with a green salad and a glass of wine, a pretty nifty lunch or dinner as well. (In fact, my writing partner, Andrew Friedman, and his wife, Caitlin, have just that for dinner at least once a week at The Red Cat's bar.) Be sure to use an Italian Fontina; the Danish varieties don't melt right for this recipe.

1½ pounds Italian Fontina, soft, brown rind trimmed and discarded, cut into 1-inch dice	1 teaspoon chopped rosemary
¼ cup olive oil	Salt
6 cloves garlic, thinly sliced	Freshly ground black pepper
1 tablespoon thyme	Sliced country bread or rolls

Preheat the broiler.

For individual servings, divide the Fontina among four 6-inch cast-iron pans. Drizzle with olive oil and scatter the garlic, thyme, and rosemary over the cheese. Season with salt and pepper. For one large pan, use a 12-inch cast-iron skillet and follow the same directions.

Broil until the cheese is melted and bubbly, 6 to 7 minutes.

Serve each person an individual pan, setting it on a trivet or napkin, or serve the 12-inch pan from the center of the table. Pass the bread alongside for dunking.