

VIN BRÛLÉ

Vin brûlé is a version of mulled wine enjoyed in Piemonte, in northwestern Italy. It's a perfect choice for holiday entertaining, because you can double or even triple the recipe and leave it over very low heat, ladling it out as your guests come in from the cold. To really take off the chill, add a dash of brandy to the cup when serving. Most recipes call for only the citrus zest, but I add the juice as well—why waste it?

Serves 6 or more

2 oranges

1 cinnamon stick

1 teaspoon allspice berries

6 whole cloves

Two 750ml bottles dry red wine (it's okay to use something inexpensive here)

$\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 cup sugar

Thin slices of orange, for serving

Brandy (optional)

Remove the peel from the oranges with a vegetable peeler. Set the peel in a square of cheesecloth with the cinnamon, allspice, and cloves, and tie to enclose.

Put the sachet in a large Dutch oven, and add the wine and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar. Bring to a bare simmer over low heat. Taste, and add the remaining sugar, to your taste. Simmer 5 minutes, then reduce heat to the lowest setting and simmer for an additional 5 to 10 minutes. To serve, drop an orange slice and a splash of brandy (if using) into a coffee mug or teacup, and ladle in the vin *brûlé*.