

Caramelized Onion-Fennel Jam with Patience

It isn't imperative that you cut the onions and fennel perfectly here, or that you actually moor yourself above the pot to stir constantly, but the further this sweet, fragrant jam cooks down, the stickier it gets, so don't *forget* about it. Smear it on toast or sandwiches, or if you're feeling daring, scoop it onto vanilla or olive oil ice cream for dessert.

TIME: 2 1/2 hours, start to finish

MAKES: about 2 1/2 cups

1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil

1 tablespoon fennel seeds

3 very large onions (about 3 pounds), halved and sliced 1/4" thick

2 fennel bulbs (about 1 pound, trimmed), cored and sliced 1/4" thick

1 teaspoon sea salt, plus more, to taste

Freshly ground pepper

Note: I save fennel fronds – the tops – and stir them into things, chopped like dill, wherever a soft, fragrant herb seems appropriate.

Heat a large, heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven over medium heat. When hot, add the oil, then the fennel seeds, and stir for 30 to 45 seconds, until toasted and fragrant. Add the onions, fennel, 1 teaspoon salt, and a bit of freshly ground pepper. Stir to lift the fennel seeds off the bottom of the pot. Cover and cook for 30 minutes, stirring every 5 minutes or so, then uncover, reduce heat to low, and continue to cook, stirring patiently, for another 1 1/2 to 2 hours. The jam is done when the onions and fennel are a rich brown color and almost all the liquid has evaporated from the pan. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve warm, or keep in the refrigerator, in an airtight container, up to 2 weeks.