

I'm in the Food for Love

Aaaah, the season of love. What better way to celebrate love than through food? Think about it, we celebrate anniversaries, birthdays, and Valentine's Day with romantic dinners. Proposals and first dates often take place over candlelight dinners. You make that favorite dish for someone you love on a special occasion or just because. Whatever the reason, there are many ways we show our love through food.

But did you know that some foods are also believed to have powerful aphrodisiac qualities to help get you "in the mood?" Whether it's love, romance, or spicing up you need, why not look in your cupboard, fridge or local supermarket for help? Instead of spending an extravagant amount of money on a material gift, how about surprising a loved one with any of the following foods or recipe ideas? Prepare your meals/food with love so that energy flows from your heart to whatever it is you're preparing. This makes the food more pleasant, enjoyable, digestible, and loveable!

Here are some "love foods" to consider.

- ❖ **Chocolate.** Aztecs and Mayans were the first to recognize the potency of chocolate. It's said that the Aztec ruler, Montezuma, drank 50 cups of chocolate a day to better serve his harem of 600, yes 600, women. Today the belief is that the molecule, phenyl ethylamine, which is in chocolate, is equal to the same molecule that courses through the veins of one who is in love.
- ❖ **Chiles.** With more than 200 varieties of chilies and the many different heat levels they contain, there are many options from which to choose. But one thing they have in common is, eating peppers gets the blood rushing, the heart pumping, the face flushing, and the pores sweating.
- ❖ **Grapes.** Considered one of the first fruits, these plump, juicy luscious spheres of goodness are used to produce many fine products. From the rich, ruby deep red wines to the shimmering pale gold of Chardonnay. Feed these powerful fruits to your love one or have them do the honor for you. Appreciate and savor the many qualities the grape has to offer.
- ❖ **Strawberries.** Fresh or chocolate dipped strawberries are perfect to entice your loved one. They just look sexy!!!
- ❖ **Honey.** From the Kama Sutra to the Bible, honey has been connected with love, sex and sensuality since the beginning of time. Hippocrates prescribed it for sexual vigor. In India it's offered to the bridegroom on his wedding day. The Honeymoon gets its name from an ancient tradition of couples going into seclusion and drinking a honey concoction until the first new moon of their marriage. Physically, honey provides instant energy. Psychologically, honey encompasses sensuality. The very word honey creates thoughts of golden, dripping, sticky sweet substances from honeybees to honeysuckles.

- ❖ **Oysters.** A symbol of virility and passion. The oyster is best experienced when eaten of the half shell. They are low in fat, high in complex sugars and proteins and more importantly, high in zinc, a key ingredient to testosterone production.

Whether you are planning a quiet, romantic evening at home or a night on the town before a romantic evening in, here are a few ideas to get you started:

- ❖ Chocolate covered strawberries, grapes, mango or bananas. If using bananas, they are better frozen after dipping in melted chocolate. Simply melt chocolate chips or chocolate squares (dark chocolate is the best) in the microwave for 10 seconds at a time or over a double broiler. Dip fruit of choice in chocolate and refrigerate until set.
- ❖ Frozen grapes and sparkling wine. Try Prusseco, a sweet Italian wine or a Muscat Cannelli.
- ❖ Chocolate (dark) or caramel fondue with fruits and pieces of angel food cake.
- ❖ Grilled, baked or raw oysters with a glass of white or sparkling white wine or sparkling, flavored water. (I couldn't leave oysters out now could I?)
- ❖ Red or white wine paired with a complementary cheese, crackers and fruit.

If you want to make a day of it from breakfast to dinner, here are some menu ideas. Enjoy!

Coddled Eggs

2 oz. wild smoked salmon

4 organic eggs

1 tbsp. organic heavy cream

Fresh chervil, parsley or watercress for garnish

Butter two ramekin dishes and divide the salmon, broken into small pieces, between them. Break two eggs into each ramekin and top with equal part of cream. Put ramekins in baking dish. Place in oven **THEN** fill baking dish with water to come half-way up the sides of the ramekins. Cook in 350 degree until set. Approximately 8-10 minutes.

Whole Grain or Wheat Toast topped with Rose Petal Jam

(found in Indian or Mid East markets)

Yogurt Parfait

Plain organic or vanilla yogurt (low-fat) or soy yogurt

Organic fruit of choice

Organic granola

Lavender honey (or your favorite honey) or agave nectar

Layer in small dish or parfait glass; Fruit 1st then yogurt, drizzled with honey.

Top yogurt with granola and more honey if you want.

Eat as is or continue to layer in order listed.

Eggs are loaded with a supply of energy-giving protein. The rose petal jam is romantic and exotic tasting. Honey is a natural sweetener that provides a good source of energy giving B vitamins, yogurt is great for digestion, the oats and nuts in granola are good for your heart as well as providing energy.

Artichoke Pizza with Feta & Thyme

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| 1 tsp. olive oil | 1 (9 ounce) can artichoke hearts, drained |
| 1 small red bell pepper, chopped | 1 lb. cheese-flavored pizza crust (cooked) |
| 1/2 small yellow or orange bell pepper, chopped | 1/2 cup crumbled feta cheese |
| 2 garlic cloves, crushed | 1/2 cup parmesan cheese |
| 1/4 cup mayonnaise | 1/2 tsp. dried thyme |
| 1/4 tsp. crushed red pepper | |
| 1/8 tsp. black pepper | |

Heat oil in skillet. Add bell peppers and sauté for 3 minutes. Add half the garlic, sautéing until just tender (not brown). Set aside. Combine remaining garlic, mayo, crushed red pepper, and artichoke hearts in food processor. Process until finely chopped. Place pizza crust on baking sheet, top with artichoke mixture, then bell pepper mixture. Sprinkle with cheeses and thyme. Bake @ 450 degrees for about 15 minutes or until nicely browned.

Mixed Greens Salad with Wild Flowers and Raspberry Vinaigrette

Mix organic lettuce greens with wild flowers (found at specialty supermarkets like Central Market); sliced Asian pears, organic apples, or pears; walnuts, Blue cheese crumbles (optional), and cranberries. Dress with your favorite raspberry or balsamic vinaigrette and toss. Top with more wild flowers.

Chocolate Hazelnut Truffles

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| 4 ounces bittersweet chocolate | 1 tbsp. hazelnut liqueur |
| 3 and 1/2 ounces almond paste | 2 tbsp. cocoa powder (unsweetened) |
| 1 tbsp. strong hot coffee | |

Chop chocolate in food processor until finely ground. Add almond paste and process until smooth. With motor running, add coffee and liqueur. Process until the mixture forms a soft ball. Roll mixture into 3/4 inch balls. Sprinkle with cocoa powder and place in small paper cups (like cup cake papers only smaller). Chill in refrigerator at least 30 minutes.

Take time not only to honor the one you love but also to honor your heart by taking optimal care of it. Eat healthy, whole foods, move your body every day, and practice stress relief techniques, like yoga, pranayama, or meditation to stay flexible, balanced, and centered.

***** **GIVE LOVE, RECEIVE LOVE AND BE LOVE** *****

Some recipes adapted from the following source: Hopkins, Martha and Randall Lockridge. Intercourses and aphrodisiac cookbook. Memphis, TN: Terrace publishing, 1997.