

Valentine's Day Dinner

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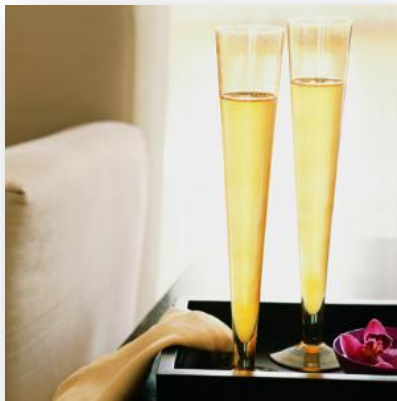
Sparkling Passion-Fruit Aperitifs

Ingredients:

- 6 tablespoons *passion-fruit* nectar
- Sparkling white wine, such as Champagne, well chilled

Method:

Divide the passion-fruit nectar between two champagne glasses. Top with the sparkling wine and serve.



Baked Brie Recipe

Ingredients:

1 large sheet of puff pastry dough or 1 tube of refrigerated crescent dinner rolls

- 1 round or wedge of Brie cheese
- Raspberry Jam, or other sweet jam
- Brown sugar
- 1/4 cup of maple syrup



Method:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. On a stick-free cookie sheet, lay out the puff pastry or the crescent rolls flat; put brie round or wedge on top.
3. Spread jam on brie, fold dough over top. Drizzle maple syrup and place a handful of brown sugar on top.
4. Bake at 350° for 25 minutes. Let cool for 10 minutes before serving.
5. Serve with crackers and apple slices.

Caesar Salad for 2

Ingredients:

- 1 head romaine lettuce
- 3/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 tablespoon ground mustard
- 1 clove crushed garlic
- 1 egg
- 1 lemon, juiced
- freshly ground black pepper
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 1/2 cups garlic croutons
- 1 (2 ounce) can anchovy filets



Method:

1. Clean lettuce thoroughly and wrap in paper towels to absorb moisture. Refrigerate until crisp, at least 1 hour or more.
2. In a bowl or jar combine oil, vinegar, Worcestershire sauce, salt, mustard, garlic and lemon juice. Whisk until well blended.
3. Coddle egg by heating 3 cups of water to boiling. Drop in egg (still in shell) and let stand for 1 minute. Remove egg from water and let cool. Once cooled crack open and whisk egg into dressing. Whisk until thoroughly blended.
4. Mash desired amount of anchovies and whisk them into the dressing. If desired set aside a few for garnish.
5. To assemble, place torn lettuce leaves in a large bowl. Pour dressing over the top and toss lightly. Add the grated cheese, garlic croutons and freshly ground pepper, toss. Serve immediately!

Pork au Poivre

Ingredients:

- 1 1/4 pounds pork tenderloin
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon black peppercorns, coarsely ground or crushed
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup chicken broth
- 1/2 cup dry red wine
- Salt



Method:

1. Slice tenderloin lengthwise, being careful not to cut through to other side. Split meat into 1 large, flat piece. Spread mustard over both sides of the meat and rub in the pepper, pressing gently so it adheres well. Cut meat crosswise into 4 even portions.
2. In large skillet, heat oil over medium flame. Put tenderloin in the pan and cook for about 10 minutes or until an instant-read thermometer registers 155 degrees F, turning once. Transfer meat to a plate and tent with foil to keep it warm.

(Alternatively, Add pork to pan; cook for 2 minutes on each side. Place the pan in oven, and bake at 425° for 12 minutes or until meat thermometer registers 160° (slightly pink). Remove pork from pan; keep warm.)

3. Add chicken broth and wine to pan and cook over medium-high heat, scraping up any bits that have stuck to the pan. Continue to cook for 8 to 10 minutes or until sauce is reduced to about a half cup. Pour sauce over meat, season with salt, and serve.

Pommes de Dauphine Potato Puffs

Ingredients:

- 2 lg. potatoes cut up
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/4 c. butter
- 1/2 c. flour
- 2 eggs
- 1 dash pepper



Method:

1. In small pan, cook potatoes in water with salt until tender. Drain. Save 2/3 cup potato water. Dry potatoes on low heat to rid excess moisture. Mash (no milk).
2. In a separate medium pan combine saved water and butter, heat over medium heat until boiling. Reduce and add flour all at once, stir fast until mixtures leave side of pan, remove and cool slightly.
3. Add eggs and mix separately. Blend in potatoes and pepper from step one. Drop by rounded teaspoonful. Deep fat fry 8 minutes until puffed and browned. You can also pipe these potatoes from a pastry bag with a star tip and bake in a 350 degree oven until hot and golden brown.



Baked Asparagus Polonaise

Ingredients:

- 1/3 c. butter
- 1/3 c. soft bread cubes
- 2 hard-cooked eggs, chopped
- 1 tbsp. chopped parsley
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 lb. fresh asparagus, cooked

Directions:

1. Melt butter until foamy. Stir in bread cubes. Cook over low heat until crisp and golden.
2. Remove from heat. Add eggs, parsley, and seasonings. Place over asparagus. Bake until serving temperature.



Heart Shaped Raspberry Sacher Torte

Raspberry Filling

Ingredients:

- 1 pkg (16 ounces) frozen raspberries packed in sugar thawed
- 1/3 cup granulated sugar
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice



Method:

1. Drain raspberries, reserving liquid.
2. Add enough water to liquid to equal 1 1/4 cups.
3. In large saucepan, combine liquid, sugar, cornstarch and lemon juice; mix well.
4. Heat and stir until mixture boils and thickens.
5. Cool completely.
6. Stir thawed raspberries into cooled mixture.

Cake:

Bake a hi-ratio devils food cake based on package directions. Cool. Split one layer in half and fill with approximately 1 ½ cups of filling. Replace top on cake.

Frosting:

Frost filled layer with a chocolate buttercream frosting. You can make your own by mixing 1 and 1/2 pounds of powdered sugar, 1 stick of butter, ¾ cup shortening, 1/4 cup canned evaporated milk, 1 T. vanilla and ½ cup cocoa powder. Beat until light and fluffy.

Chocolate Covering:

The classical version for this cake is to make a gnash with heavy cream and chocolate. I make mine with just a good chocolate melted and poured over the top. You want to make sure you do not overheat the chocolate since it will separate and look streaky. Under heating the chocolate won't give a shine.

Chocolate Soufflé

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar, plus extra for the soufflé dish
- 2 ounces bittersweet chocolate, coarsely chopped
- 1/4 cup heavy cream
- 2 tablespoons water
- 4 large egg whites
- Blood Orange Crème Anglaise

This recipe uses a stable Italian meringue base (rather than standard whipped egg whites). This technique allows it to be made up to 12 hours ahead of time.



Special equipment: You can find a pastry brush at kitchen supply stores or online. To make the sugar syrup, you'll need a deep-frying/candy thermometer that's up to the task.

Game plan: Make sure the bowl you whip the egg whites in is very clean. The crème anglaise can be made well before you start the soufflé—even the day before.

Method:

1. Using a pastry brush, brush soufflé dish with melted butter. Coat the dish with sugar and tap out excess. Chill in the refrigerator until butter is firm.
2. Place chocolate in a medium bowl. Bring cream to a simmer in a small saucepan over medium heat. Pour cream over chocolate, let stand 1 minute, and stir until chocolate is melted and evenly combined.
3. Combine 1/4 cup sugar and water in a small saucepan, set over medium-high heat, and attach a candy thermometer. Bring to a boil and cook until mixture reaches 243°F, about 5 minutes.
4. Put egg whites in the bowl of a stand mixer with a whisk attachment. Whisk on high until soft peaks form, about 1 to 2 minutes. With the mixer running on high, slowly pour hot syrup in a thin stream down the bowl into the egg whites. Continue beating until stiff peaks form and meringue is warm (not hot), about 3 minutes.
5. Fold 1/2 of the meringue into the chocolate mixture until just mixed. Add remaining meringue and fold until just incorporated. Spoon meringue into the prepared dish and fill within 1/2 inch of the rim. Refrigerate, covered, for up to 12 hours.
6. Heat the oven to 375°F and arrange the rack in the bottom third. Remove soufflé from the refrigerator for 30 minutes while the oven preheats. Five minutes before baking, place a baking sheet on the rack. After five minutes, place soufflé on the heated baking sheet and bake until it is well risen, the top is browned, the edges appear dry, and the center is set (not moving if lightly touched), about 25 to 30 minutes. Serve immediately with Blood Orange Crème Anglaise.

Blood Orange Crème Anglaise

Ingredients:

- 3/4 cup heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon blood orange zest, finely grated
- 1/3 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup freshly squeezed blood orange juice
- 3 large egg yolks



Method:

1. Combine cream, zest, and about 1/2 of the sugar in a small saucepan and bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring to dissolve sugar.
2. In a medium nonreactive bowl, whisk together remaining sugar, juice, and yolks until well blended, about 1 minute. Remove cream mixture from heat and, whisking constantly, slowly pour into egg mixture in a thin stream.
3. Return sauce to the saucepan, place over medium-low heat, and cook, stirring constantly, until mixture thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon, about 5 to 6 minutes. (It should look like melted ice cream.)
4. Strain through a fine mesh strainer. Serve hot or cold.

Fresh Strawberries and Cream

Ingredients:

- Fresh Strawberries
- Freshly whipped sweetened heavy cream

Method:

You're on your own. =o)



History of Valentine's Day

The origins of Valentine's Day trace back to the ancient Roman celebration of Lupercalia. Held on February 15, Lupercalia honored the gods Lupercus and Faunus, as well as the legendary founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus.

In addition to a bountiful feast, Lupercalia festivities are purported to have included the pairing of young women and men. Men would draw women's names from a box, and each couple would be paired until next year's celebration.



While this pairing of couples set the tone for today's holiday, it wasn't called "Valentine's Day" until a priest named Valentine came along. Valentine, a romantic at heart, disobeyed Emperor Claudius II's decree that soldiers remain bachelors. Claudius handed down this decree believing that soldiers would be distracted and unable to concentrate on fighting if they were married or engaged. Valentine defied the emperor and secretly performed marriage ceremonies. As a result of his defiance, Valentine was put to death on February 14.

After Valentine's death, he was named a saint. As Christianity spread through Rome, the priests moved Lupercalia from February 15 to February 14 and renamed it St. Valentine's Day to honor Saint Valentine