

taste buds

chef Larry Janes

Feast on special desserts

OK folks, this is your conscience talking . . . It's getting close to Valentine's Day. Love. Amore. Don't you think it's time you indulged just once? Wouldn't it be fun again to tickle the icing off the beaters?

Remember the days your fingers were turned into bulldozers as you made sure every last scrap was removed from the bottom of the frosting bowl?

EVERY NOW and then, it's necessary to just "get crazy" and make something totally decadent and sinful. No worrying about calories, cholesterol or fat. And what better time of the year to blame it on than Valentine's Day? What better way to say "I Love You" than something from the oven.

Cards, flowers and perfumes are all alternative and approved gifts, but something homemade always shows you care just a little bit more. Probably because you took all the time and effort to do it yourself. Anyone can drive to the florist and buy a dozen roses. Ditto for a trip to the mall for some trendy perfume. But an afternoon or evening in the kitchen, just you and your bowls -- and maybe some romantic music in the background to set the mood. Something homemade. Something delectable. Something your love can really sink their teeth into.

So just what is it that makes Valentine's desserts so special? If cupid's day evokes visions of roses and perfume, calorie laden and succulent desserts are the exclamation point. This is surely the day that calls for heavy cream, sugar, real vanilla and chocolate. Worry about calories tomorrow, for on Valentine's Day, you feast.

A SUGGESTION, for starters, could possibly be a homemade box of truffles delivered right after lunch in a satiny box. Just a few, select, handmade truffles, not a four pound box that gets passed around the office like that door-to-door fund-raiser box you bought in October.

Intimacy must prevail. The classic Valentine's dessert, Cœur à la Crème is a simple treat to prepare that consumes far more time than talent. Specialty heart shaped molds can be had around town starting at \$15, but yours truly bought a heart-shaped cake pan for \$4, drilled a few holes in the bottom, and viola! You can line the pan with cheesecloth and follow the recipe, which will yield a triple cream cheese dessert that literally melts in your mouth, especially when surrounded by fresh fruit and purees.

Chocolate has been known for ages as the "edible affection confection." Pastry and dessert chefs are concocting wild creations with tempered chocolate -- everything from pianos to obscene X-rated edible treats. Metropolitan Detroit has many specialty food shops and dessert emporiums that will melt your lover's heart faster than a chocolate bar in hot little hands.

DO-IT-YOURSELFERS CAN find homemade chocolate molds, pans, supplies and instructions at cake decorating stores and gourmet shops like Kitchen Glamour.

But believe it or not, one of my best sources for sweet Valentine's desserts comes from paging through my favorite cookbooks. Many dessert cookbooks available at your local library have detailed instructions and pictures to many dazzling Valentine's desserts with minimal skill.

So come on, no one ever believed the old wife's tale -- "A moment on the lips, forever on the hips" -- not on Valentine's Day anyway.

See recipes inside.



A '50s kind of Love

When eating well meant eating rich

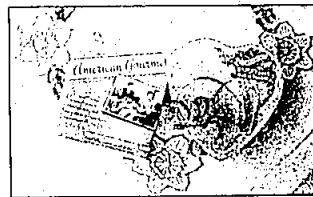
By Larry Janes
special writer

THERE ARE cooks, there are chefs, there are culinary bon vivants. And then there's Heidi Lichtenstein, the highly outspoken and cutting edge retro '50s queen of Cinderella's Attic, a trendy vintage clothing store in downtown Royal Oak.

DOES SHE cook? To put it in her own words: "I use cooking to 'chill out' -- kinda therapeutically, ya know? But only as long as it's in my '50s kitchen complete with pink boomerang Formica counters, my Bakelite knives (highly collectible), the turquoise oven bakeware, Fiesta dinnerware, Howdy Doody utensils and pink flamingo glassware."

This from a lady who swears she wears poodle-embroidered aprons and an occasional strand of Jane Cleaver pearls over a set of leopard skin tights.

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Photos by JIM RIDE/Valent photographer

Left, when her sweetheart, Mike "Boss Hoss" Miller, a bass player with Goobor and the Pens is not on tour, Heidi Lichtenstein, of Rochester Hills, co-owner of Cinderella's Attic, treats him to homemade meals. For Valentine's Day, she planned a special meal of foods from the '50s and '60s. Above, "American Gourmet" by Jane and Michael Stern features classic recipes for swanky company food from the '50s and '60s.

She cooks smart for her heart

family tested
winner
dinner
Betsy Brethen

With Valentine's Day only four days away, it seemed fitting and appropriate to select a Winner Dinner that was not only tasty, but heart-healthy as well.

After all, the evidence is proving that a diet low in fat and cholesterol will increase your chances for a long, healthy life. Recognizing that it is preventive medicine at its best, more and more people, including this week's Winner Dinner Winner, Pamela Livingston Hardy, are modifying their diet without giving up the pleasures of good food.

MARRIED AND the mother of two grown children, Hardy and her husband live in downtown Birmingham in an old home that they totally renovated, much of it by themselves.

A part-time psychotherapist specializing in family and addiction problems, Hardy has taught marriage and family classes at Oakland Community College. Over the past five years, her focus has gradually shifted away from her career and more toward volunteer work.

Hardy has been active in the support of Oakland Family Services, a family-focused human service agency serving Oakland County residents on an ability-to-pay basis.



STEVE CANTRELL/Valent photographer

Making black beans and rice is a labor of love for this week's Winner Dinner Winner Pamela Livingston Hardy. This easy to make entree is served with lemon broccolini and spicy peaches.

Dunstan's Theater on Wednesday, Feb. 12. A special preview of the romantic comedy "Company" will begin at 8 p.m., followed by an afterglow featuring lots of Valentine treats and goodies.

Patron tickets are \$20, benefactors \$40. If you are interested in attending, or would like more information, call Hardy at 540-4808.

Thank you Pamela Hardy, for sharing your recipes with us, and congratulations on being selected

this week's Winner Dinner Winner. Until next time, all the best and in the spirit of St. Valentine, please keep those favorite low fat, low cholesterol recipes coming.

Submit recipes to be considered for publication to Winner Dinner, P.O. Box 3503, Birmingham 48012. All submissions become the property of The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. Each winner receives an apron with the words "Winner Dinner" on it.

OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC
WINNER DINNER

Recipes

BLACK BEANS AND RICE

Hearty and low in fat, this meatless dish tastes great and is easy to make.

This recipe serves four.

2 cans Progresso ready to serve black beans

1 1/2 cups chicken broth

1 cup onion, chopped

1/2 green pepper, chopped

1/2 cup red pepper, chopped

3 cloves garlic, minced

1/2 teaspoon ground cumin

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon pepper

2 teaspoons (or to taste) hot sauce

(Duke's hot cayenne pepper sauce)

1 1/2 cups canned diced tomatoes

2 1/2 cups hot, cooked rice (prepared without salt or fat)

Coat a 4-quart sauce pan with cooking spray. Add the chopped onion and next three ingredients and saute until tender, using chicken broth as needed.

Add the beans, slightly drained, and the diced tomatoes to the onion mixture and stir well.

Add the remaining spices and the hot sauce and bring to a boil.

Cover and reduce the heat, stirring occasionally so that the mixture doesn't burn on the bottom, and simmer for 30 minutes.

Cook converted rice according to directions on the box. Add to the bean mixture and mix well.

LEMON BROCCOLI

1 bunch fresh broccoli

1/2-1 teaspoon grated lemon rind

salt and pepper to taste

Trim off the large leaves of broccoli. Discard the tough ends of the lower stalks and wash the broccoli thoroughly.

Cover and cook in a vegetable steamer or in a small amount of boiling water for 12 minutes or until the broccoli is tender. Drain and place on a serving platter.

Sprinkle with grated lemon rind, salt and pepper.

SPICY PEACHES

2 tablespoons brown sugar

1 tablespoon rum

1 teaspoon margarine

1 teaspoon lemon juice

1/2 teaspoon cinnamon or allspice

2 cups sliced peaches, fresh or frozen

1/2 cup plain low-fat yogurt

Combine brown sugar, rum, margarine or butter, lemon juice and all spice or cinnamon in a saucepan.

Cook and stir these ingredients over medium heat until the mixture is bubbly. Add the peach slices.

Cook uncovered and stirring occasionally for 3-4 minutes (2 minutes for frozen peach slices) or until the peaches are just tender.

To serve, spoon the warm fruit into four dessert dishes and dollop with yogurt. Serves four.