

taste buds
chef Larry
Janes

Lover plans a meal

A venture into any mall will still find a few diminishing boxes of holiday giftwrap and assorted Christmas paraphernalia, all at more than 50 percent off. And here it is, February already, and I'm getting ready to celebrate Valentine's Day.

Winter is half over and Easter is just a scad more than 45 days away. With Valentine's Day beckoning, I find it only apropos to concoct an aphrodisiac's delight for my loved one.

Before beginning this amorous journey, we must purge our minds of the horror stories about what we thought aphrodisiacs were. From this day forward, erase from your mind the thought of those "South-of-the-Border" insects and those European "lickers." The locker room conversations of what we could do with those exceeded our realm of possibilities — even though I was only 16. (Oh, those were the days.)

Rather than invite the likes of Masters and Johnson into the small confines of my kitchen, I will begin with the age-old realization of the powers of the almighty seafood. Now we're not talking just about oysters here, buddy. Crustaceans brimming with iodine, namely shrimps, lobsters and crab, have long been praised for their suitability to the titillating pleasures of a candlelight dinner.

MY SOURCES also continue to elaborate on the sexual prowess gained from the great truffle. It is written that eating truffles "makes women more tender and men more apt to love." However, the imported variety goes for a little more than \$300 per pound. (And we thought those cute little pigs who sniff them out of the ground were hungry, eh?)

As if that weren't enough, it is written that bamboo shoots, bird's nest soup, ducks feet, ginger, ginseng and water chestnuts absolutely drive some people wild. (And you thought Hong Kong was crowded?) Not being one to place all the blame on the Chinese, did you know that Parmesan cheese, garlic, olive oil and veal are the main ingredients in what gives those wily Italians their zest for life?

I have a research assistant from the local university helping me on this, and she insists that olive oil must have been for the old folks because Crisco oil is the "thing" nowadays. (If only Loretta Lynn knew what it really does!)

As if those foods which give us a "passion" (excuse the pun) for life only help the Chinese and Italians, I know of not one ancestral group who would dare claim fame to the likes of raw beef, brandy, cardamom, dandelions, dates, raw eggs, fennel, frogs, gelatin, leeks, liver, nutmeg, pimentos, pistachios, snakehead, tomatoes (did you know they were once called "love apples?"), tucana, vanilla and yes, Mama, even watermelon. I told you not to swallow those seeds!

WITH SAUCEPAN and skillet in hand, I venture into the realm of seduction. My lover's dinner would consist of an appetizer of Steak Tartare followed by six oysters on the half shell. If, by that time, the magical juices still had not performed their randy magic, I would then proceed to a salad made with fresh truffles, leeks, pimentos and tomatoes in a garlic/brandy sweet dressing.

If that didn't start the undressing, I would prepare my Veal Parmesan and water chestnuts sautéed in pure virgin olive oil. (Take note, Loretta Lynn.) What's that, my dear? Some Chocolate Genoise

Please turn to Page 2



JIM JAGDFELD/staff photographer

Coeur a la Creme is a classic Valentine's Day dessert that can be prepared in a mold made especially for this purpose, or in an inexpensive heart-shaped cake pan. The rich, triple-cream-cheese dessert may be adorned with strawberries and assorted fresh fruit.

Sweets for your sweetie

Share these treats on Valentine's Day

By Larry Janes
special writer

OK folks, this is your conscience talking. I know how good you've been, what with staying on that ridiculously silly Oprah diet — those Calvinists are just another 15 pounds away but stop right here.

You deserve a break today. After all, it's Valentine's Day. Love. Amore. Don't you think it's time you indulged just once? Wouldn't it be fun again to lick the beaters off the mixer? 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 some-

thing totally outrageous and sinful. What better time of the year to blame it on than Valentine's Day?

Still not quite convinced that you should indulge? Let's make a deal. You make something decadent and laden with calories, enjoy a bit of it with your lover, then send all the rest to the neighbor, to school or to the office. No, you can't have a doggie bag because I'm already allowing you to lick the beaters and bowl.

What better way to say "I love

you" than something from the kitchen. Cards, flowers and perfumes are all alternate and approved gifts, but something from home always shows you care just a little bit more. Probably because you made the time and effort to do it yourself.

ANYONE CAN DRIVE to the florist and get roses. Ditto for a trip to the mall for some trendy perfume. But an afternoon or evening in the kitchen, just you and your bowl —

maybe a little soft music in the background. Aw, what the heck, maybe even a glass of wine.

You just can't beat something homemade.

So what makes Valentine's Day desserts so special? If Cupid's Day evokes visions of roses and perfume, calorie laden and succulent desserts are the exclamation point. This is the day for heavy cream, sugar, real vanilla and chocolate.

If you're looking for something small, a tiny box of homemade truffles delivered right after lunch in a satin box can say more than most four-pound cheesecakes. Remember, if you're sending to the office, it should be intimate — just enough for

Please turn to Page 3

New gourmet menus are heart-healthy, too

By Mary Rodrigue
staff writer

If you want to do something nice for your valentine, skip the chocolates and head for a healthy gourmet meal at one of metro Detroit's premiere restaurants.

Wait, isn't that a contradiction in terms? Healthy and gourmet mix like oil and water, right? Not if you skip the butter, whipping cream, egg yolks and cheese. So what's left? Well, there's still wine, sauces based in chicken or beef stock, fruits and vegetables and broiled fish, poultry and lean cuts of meat. And don't forget dessert.

Doug Grech, better known as Chef Douglass, proprietor of Brasserie Douglass in Southfield, has whipped up a special menu for February that patrons can eat guilt-free.

And if you think healthy foods mean boring meals, think again. Entrees include fillet of sole stuffed with broccoli mousse on black bean gravy, blanquette de veau in squash, and grilled turkey steak with raspberry sauce and potato dumpling.

THERE'S A low-salt, low-cho-

lesterol Caesar salad, and pears and grapefruit with hot orange dressing. Desserts include lemonade crepes, rice pudding and apricots, and chocolate soufflé with bananas foster.

"Instead of a heart of chocolate, give her a heart that will last forever," said Grech, who is anxious for feedback from his heart-healthy menu.

"I've always dealt with upscale food. It was hard to adapt without the basic culinary ingredients like butter, whipping cream and egg yolks," he said.

Grech's gourmet training at the prestigious Ecole Hotelier de Paris in France didn't exactly stress an awareness of cholesterol, fats and sodium.

As executive chef at the Pontchartrain Hotel and Great Dane restaurant before opening Brasserie Douglass more than a decade ago, he admits that some of his recipes have clogged arteries. For a time he thought adaptation to more healthful cooking would be impossible.

"Removing butter, whipping cream and egg yolks from the repertoire totally, how do I thicken the sauce?" he said. "But it can be done. Painting my Picasso's, I put

myself in front of the stove and bring everything from inside me."

GRECH IS convinced healthier eating is the wave of the future.

"In California they are producing chickens without cholesterol in the eggs. In Montana they are producing pork with lower fat than beef. This is the future of tomorrow. It hasn't hit Michigan yet but it will."

Grech's health-conscious-raising has a lot to do with his longtime friend, Marge Devine, a Birmingham nurse with an unwavering interest in good nutrition.

"My father died of a heart attack at age 52," she said. "I guess that always made me more conscious of good nutrition."

As a production intern on WTWS-TV, Channel 58's "Late Night America with Dennis Wholey" program, Devine produced a segment highlighting a prominent Arizona cardiologist.

A fan of good food but wary of the fat and cholesterol associated with gourmet meals, she tried to arrange a collaboration between her friend Douglass and the doctor.

But the logistics of the Michigan



Chef Douglass prepares an entree from the special menu of heart-healthy foods he will serve during February at Brasserie Douglass in Southfield.

Please turn to Page 2