



Food in the Time of Quarantine

February 2021



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Letter from the Editor

“Cooking is like love. It should be entered into with abandon, or not at all.” – Julia Child

Dear Reader,

If you, like me, bookmark recipes because someone you love would just adore eating it, then one of your love languages is food. Food is a great way to say I love you. Great food is something you tenderly serve to a child, a parent, a spouse, or a dear friend. This year the safest way to celebrate is at home, with delightful dishes in the kitchen. You will find plenty of charming cheap eats within these pages. If you don't mind a bit of effort, make adorable heart shaped pasta in a pink sauce along with Indrani Sen (pg. 16). Indulge in a sensual treat with Azlin Bloor's Thai Style Grilled Oysters (pg. 7), or make Jasmina Brozovic's adorable puff pastry hearts with your little ones (pg. 22). In this issue you'll find decadent starters, succulent mains and luscious desserts. Hopefully we can help bring some love to your holiday.

Happy Valentine's Day! May love find you.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joy Gordon Stewart".

Joy Gordon Stewart & the FitToQ team



Ignite Your Passion with this Decadent Risotto

By Lisa Watson

If you're looking for a first course to win over your guests and destroy your enemies, then you've come to the right place. Risotto made with Prosecco (or any dry

sparkling white wine) makes an elegant start to a meal. Actually, I'm not sure how you will destroy your enemies with risotto, unless you dump a truck-load of it on top of them, but it will make any dinner guests glad that they took up your dinner

invitation! It is very typical to eat risotto or pasta as a start to a long festive meal. It is usually preceded by many aperitifs, and followed by some kind of meat dish and three or four different sides, then dessert, then coffee, then a liqueur like grappa to try to settle all that food jostling around in your stomach. It's no surprise that in Italian, there is a word for the sleepiness you feel after eating a big meal for lunch: it's called *l'abbiccio*. This is one of those untranslatable words that they should really think up a word for in English. We English-speakers get our own back though for the fact that Italians don't have a word for "toes"; they just call them "feet fingers" (dita dei piedi)!

Tips to make risotto even more elegant

If you're looking to make this risotto even more sumptuous, you could drizzle some truffle oil over it just before serving, or ever scatter tiny pieces of chopped up truffle over the top of it; that is if you can get your hands on a truffle. This year because of the long drought, truffles in Italy are in short supply.

This risotto is very delicate in taste, so I highly recommend using homemade stock, or a good store-bought one, as most of the flavour comes from this ingredient.



This photo is of Bassano di Grappa. It is a beautiful village in the hills, not far from Venice, and very close to the vineyards that grow grapes for making wonderful Prosecco. The grappa they also make in the area is made from the skins and stems of the grapes after the juice has been pressed out of them.

Risotto with Prosecco and Hazelnuts

Prep Time 10 mins

Cook Time 25 mins

Total Time 35 mins

Serves 4 people

Ingredients

4 Tbsp Olive Oil
400 g Canaroli or aborio rice 2 cups
1 small Onion
200 ml Prosecco 3/4 cup
Vegetable or Chicken Stock
60 g Hazelnuts 2.1 oz
40 g Grated Parmesan Cheese 4 Tbsp
1 tsp Salt

Instructions

Toast the hazelnuts by putting them in a small dry frying pan and cooking them at a moderate temperature on the stove-top for 5 minutes. Let cool, then chop roughly.

Heat the stock in a pot on the stove until it is simmering.

While the stock is heating, finely chop the onion.

Heat 4 Tbsp of olive oil in a different large, heavy-based pot. Saute the onion until it becomes translucent.

Add the rice and stir until it browns slightly.

Add the prosecco and let it boil off.

Pour in enough heated stock to cover the rice mixture. and put the timer on for 13 minutes.

Add the salt and stir in.

As the rice is cooking, watch the level of the water. As it goes down, add water from the simmering pot, one ladle-full (or cupful) at a time. Stir the rice often.

As the time gets to around 12 minutes, start tasting the rice to see how done it is. The type of rice you have may vary the cooking times. If it's close to being cooked, don't add any more water and let the water in the rice boil off, stirring frequently.

Just before you take the risotto off the heat, add the Parmesan cheese and stir it in.

Sprinkle the risotto with the chopped hazelnuts before serving.



Seduce Your Valentine with the Ocean's Aphrodisiac & This Fabulous Thai Flavored Starter

By Azlin Bloor

This Thai style grilled oyster recipe is an amazing party dish, especially when you plan to impress.

The sweet, creamy, briny and sometimes coppery flavour of the oysters is enhanced by the hot and sour flavours of our Thai

marinade. It's a delicious combination, and after tasting one, you'll wish you'd made more. If someone else would just shuck the damn things, of course.

This is a very quick and easy recipe, just a case of putting together a simple Thai or South East Asian style dipping sauce, adding to the oysters and grilling the oysters under a hot grill for about 4 minutes.

The result is a potent blend of silky smooth oyster and hot and sour dipping sauce – awesome!

It's so easy, that it's even a super quick post! No exciting ingredient or method to talk about today! Enjoy it while you can – doesn't happen very often!

Oyster Lover or Hater?

I absolutely love oysters. Any which way I'm served them. Considered peasant food a hundred years or so ago, but now, highly prized as sexy, upmarket fare, they hardly need any preparation to be enjoyed.

And yet, today's Thai styled grilled oysters is going to change your mind about that. The flavour is simply out of this world.

The only thing that may put people off in preparing oysters at home is the shucking. I must confess it's not my favourite part either. But needs must!

I have a quick video showing you how to do it, if you fancy giving it a try. Or better still,

get someone else to do it for you and reward them with a glass of wine. Or a kiss.

Shall we get our aprons on?

Thai Styled Grilled Oysters

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 4 minutes

Total Time: 19 minutes

Servings: 2

Ingredients

10-12 Oysters

Dipping Sauce

60 ml fish sauce

60 ml lime juice or rice wine vinegar

2 Thai Birds Eye Chilli 1 of each colour, if you like

1 spring onion (scallion)

1/2 clove garlic

2 sprigs fresh coriander leaves (cilantro)

Instructions

Preheat the grill to its highest setting.

Shuck the oysters (watch the [video](#)).

Chop the chillies, garlic, spring onion and coriander finely.

Mix the fish sauce and lime juice.

Add the chopped ingredients to the sauce.

Spoon about half a tsp of the sauce onto each oyster and grill for 4 minutes.

Serve immediately, served with just a little more of the dipping sauce.

Be careful, the oysters will be very hot, shell and meat.



Let this Decadent Pasta Bring the Romance

By Joy Gordon Stewart

I highly recommend you make this rich, sexy pasta for your Valentine this year. Why? Well, it is exquisite in its decadence, and clever in its simple execution. This pasta was introduced to me by a dear friend and talented home chef who based it off of a Marcella Hazan recipe, with a few tweaks. I made it her special way many times and over the years I have added my

own touches, most notably, the addition of melty fresh mozzarella and a tiny burst of heat to compliment the rich, sweet sauce.

Use whichever type of pasta strikes your fancy. I usually make this with spaghetti, but I had linguine on hand.

Do try to get a dark honey, such as buckwheat. Those molasses notes make an absolutely stunning addition and elevate

the tart, brassy flavor of tinned tomatoes. I usually find my buckwheat or wildflower honey at farmer's markets or small specialty grocers (and probably on the internet, as well).

Linguine alla Marcella con Mozzarella

Serves 8 (see notes below)

1 1/2 lbs pasta of choice
1 yellow onion, peeled and cut in half
8 oz. fresh mozzarella, cut into 1/2" pieces
1 (28 oz) can crushed tomatoes
1/2 cup butter (1 stick)
1 - 2 teaspoons buckwheat (or similar)
honey
Pinch of crushed red pepper
Salt, to taste
Pepper, to taste

Method

In a medium pot over low flame, combine tomatoes, onion, butter and red pepper flakes. Season with salt and pepper. The sauce will need to simmer on low for 45 minutes. Stir occasionally.

In the last 20 minutes of cook time for the sauce add honey one teaspoon at a time, until it is as you prefer it (should be just a touch sweet, like a bursting-ly ripe cherry tomato) adjust for salt and pepper. Prepare the pasta according to the package directions.

Strain pasta and reserve 1/4 cup pasta water. In a large mixing bowl mix pasta, sauce, mozzarella and pasta water together.

Serve garnished with chopped flat leaf parsley.

Notes: For reasons made apparent by the recipe, you will be making far more sauce than is needed for just two people. Do make all of the sauce. It keeps in the refrigerator for 5-7 days and is fabulous with or without the mozzarella. To serve to two you'll need 1/2 lb of dried pasta, 4 ounces mozzarella & approximately 1/4 of the sauce (or to taste).



This Stuffed Chicken Breast with Saffron Sauce is Perfect for a Special Dinner

By Balvinder Ubi

Create excitement at the dinner table with this surprisingly easy spinach stuffed chicken breast with saffron sauce. Serve it with steamed vegetables and aromatic rice pilaf for a romantic dinner.

I don't have much to say about the recipe other than that when I made this for us a

few years ago, my husband vocalized his happiness with each bite. Made with simple ingredients this recipe is full of substance to satisfy.

Spinach Stuffed Chicken Breast with Saffron Sauce

Ingredients:

4 individual chicken breasts
300 gm cleaned spinach leaves
2 tbsp dried cranberries
1/3 cup freshly grated Parmesan
1/4 tsp nutmeg powder
salt and pepper to season
1 teaspoon red chili powder (optional)
Oil for pan frying

Saffron sauce

Few strands saffron
1 1/2 cup half and half, at room temperature (10% fat milk)
1/4 cup finely chopped onion
1 tbsp oil

Instructions:

Soak saffron strands in 1/4 cup warm half and half. Preheat oven to 375°F at step 5

In a large skillet, heat up olive oil. Add garlic and sauté for about 1 minute, until the garlic is just beginning to brown. Add spinach to the pan and gently toss to mix

with sautéed garlic. Cook on high heat until it is wilted and no liquid remains (If you're using high heat and a large frying pan, the liquid evaporates quickly).

Let it cool. Transfer to a chopping board and coarsely chop it. Add dried cranberries, cheese, nutmeg, red chili powder and salt to taste.

Lay all four chicken breasts on the cutting board. Remove the tendons. With your hand supporting each piece, create an opening in the chicken breast to form a pocket about 3/4 quarter of the way through, being careful not to cut all the way. Season the inside and outside with salt and pepper.

Add one fourth of the filling into the pocket. Lightly secure with toothpicks. Now rub red chili powder on the outside of chicken breast. Repeat the whole process with the remaining breasts.

Heat oil over medium heat in a large skillet (use the same in which you cooked spinach but wipe it clean). Carefully add chicken and cook 4 -6 minutes on both sides (until chicken is golden and crispy). Remove chicken in an oven proof dish. Cover with foil and bake 15-20 minutes until chicken is fully cooked.

Let rest, covered for 5 minutes before slicing.

Meanwhile, heat 1 tbsp oil in the same pan in which you just seared chicken breast on medium heat and sauté onion until golden (don't worry about the brown stuff you see in the pan that is the evaporated juices of the cooked chicken breast.) Add half and half.

Simmer for about 10 minutes to reduce.

Blend the sauce or strain it.

Pour sauce over sliced stuffed chicken breast and serve with rice pilaf and steamed vegetables.

Notes

If you don't have half-and-half, just pour equal parts milk and cream into a jar, shake it. Here in Canada, it is sold premixed.



Make This Fabulous French Classic to Romance Your Valentine

By Giangi Townsend

For many of us, the winter chill still lingers. Some of us have woken up to frost; others to heavy snowfall. I am ready for cozying up on the couch with my warm blanket. And nothing like rotten weather to finally add some savory flavors to my cooking and using rich hearty ingredients.

Mushrooms are what comes to mind and I cannot get enough of them. With my last expedition to our local farmer's market, I purchased some wonderful chanterelle,

shiitake, and cremini mushrooms. As soon as I saw them this recipe jumped into the mind and I could not wait to go home and prepare it for my family.

A classic French dish enjoyed this time of year and always as with the newly cultivated mushrooms we do not have to wait to be in season to enjoy this dish.

Tips

One inch to one inch and half bone-in pork chop will work magically with this recipe.

Obviously, a thicker one will do as well, however, it will require a bit longer cooking time.

Score the fat outer edge of the pork chop. This will prevent the chop meaty part to curl up and cook unevenly.

Be very generous with your seasoning. Coat all sides of the pork chop with flour and dredge well.

As with all food that is fried, please keep a close look at it. If the oil is smoking, it will not cook your chop properly. Remove from the heat, let it cool off and restart once the smoke subsides.

Always lower the heat or even shut it off if you do not feel comfortable when adding alcohol to a hot pan. Keep a distance with a watchful eye.

If the price of wild mushrooms is too dear, this dish will still be fabulous with baby bellas and button mushrooms.

Pork chops with mushrooms ragout

4 6-ounces bone in pork chops
Salt and pepper
Flour for dredging
Olive oil as needed
1 small shallot, minced
2 cups assorted mushrooms: Shiitake, Chanterelle, Cremini, tip end removed and sliced
1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
1/3 cup white wine
¼ cup chicken broth
2 tablespoons unsalted butter

Season the pork chops generously with salt and pepper. Dredge in the flour and shake off any excess.

Pour oil into a large skillet to a depth of 1/8 of inch and heat over high heat until surface of the oil is shimmering but not smoking. Add the pork chops and pan fry them on one side until golden brown, 3 to 4

minutes. Turn carefully the chops over and continue cooking on the second side until the chops are cooked through and the exterior is golden brown. Transfer them to a warm place and cover with aluminum foil to keep warm.

Pour off all the fat except 2 tablespoons of the oil. Add the shallots to the skillet and sauté over medium heat until translucent, about 1 minute. Increase the heat to high and add the mushrooms and thyme and sauté until the mushrooms are lightly brown, 3-4 minutes.

Add the wine and stir to deglaze the pan, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom. Add the broth and any juices released from the chops. Simmer over high heat until the liquid has reduced by about half, 5 to 7 minutes.

Swirl in the butter to thicken the sauce slightly. Serve the pork chops immediately with the sauce.



Your Valentine will Adore this Cute Homemade Pasta

By Indrani Sen

These are pretty looking homemade pastas in beetroot based pink sauce. The dish is pretty, delicious and savoury and can be served for valentine's day dinner.

Heart shaped pastas in pink sauce

Ingredients

Pasta

2 cups refined flour

3 eggs

1/2 tsp salt

Sauce

1 beetroot

1 cup cream

2 garlic grated

1/2 cup cheddar grated

chopped basil leaves

1 tbsp butter

1 tsp ground black pepper

Instructions

Pasta

Pour the flour in a flat container

Make a well in the centre.

Add the eggs

Add salt.

Bring everything together with fingers.

Knead it and make a firm dough.

Add little milk if it's too dry.

Roll the dough into a very thin sheet.

With a cookie cutter cut heart shapes.

oil water in a colander.

Add the pastas and cook till they start floating in water.

Sauce

Boil the beetroot till tender

Make a puree.

In a pan add butter.

add grated garlic

Add the beetroot puree

Add fresh cream and stir

Add grated cheddar and stir.

Add the boiled pasta

Stir in some chopped basil leaves.

Sprinkle some black pepper and serve.



This Luscious Dessert is Perfect for Treating the Ones You Love

By Preethi Prasad

A quick and easy recipe that contains no eggs or gelatin / Agar Agar and is suitable

for any occasion. Eggless chocolate mousse has nice light, airy and smooth texture. I have used real chocolate to make this. There is no gelatin in mousse, so it is purely

vegetarian chocolate mousse. It is a heavy desert as we use cream. Small portions will be nice to gorge on.

Eggless Chocolate Mousse

(Serves 4)

Ingredients

175 Gms Dairy Milk Chocolate(Plain) Or any Cooking Chocolate

25 Gms White Cooking Chocolate

6 Digestive Biscuits

1.5 Tbsp Butter (Cold)

120 Gms Whipping Cream(Cold)

Chocolate to Garnish

Method

Place the chocolate and butter in a bowl. Put that bowl on top of a saucepan over simmering water . Make sure that water is not touching to the bottom of the top bowl. Melt the chocolate completely and stir continuously to ensure there are no lumps . Remove it once the chocolate has melted completely and let it cool for about 15-20 minutes.

In the meantime whip the cold cream using a hand blender till stiff peaks form. Keep some cream aside for topping. Unfold the balance cream into the chocolate mixture and mix slowly so that the cream is well incorporated. Do not over mix.

Take a serving bowl or glass. Crush the digestive biscuits. Add a tsp of butter and mix well. Put it equally into the bowl / glass and press with a spoon to spread evenly. Pour the Chocolate Mousse . Refrigerate for 1.5 hrs. Just before serving top it with some fresh cream and place a chocolate on top or you can garnish with choco chips or fruits or anything of your choice.

You can make it in advance and please your guests.



Make Decadent Poached Pears to Treat Your Sweetheart

By Jodi Kaplan

Normally, Valentine's Day means romance. But this year, we may not be able to go out to fancy dinners. Whether you

have a valentine or not, you can still treat yourself to a delicious treat. Because you've survived our crazy times, and you deserve it!

Whether you are cooking for two, or flying solo, poached pears with chocolate sauce and ice cream is going to be a hit. The long name makes it sound kind of complicated, but it's really easy.

First, you poach the pears by letting them simmer gently in a bit of sugar and water. Let them cool off a bit, then put them on a plate with ice cream and drizzle chocolate syrup over them. It feels like you're doing something fancy for company, but you don't have to share! Unless you want to.

The other nice thing is this recipe is fairly budget friendly. You can upgrade to organic pears or super fancy ice cream, but the ordinary kind will do just as well.

Poached Pear with Chocolate Sauce

Prep time: 5 minutes

Cook time: 15 minutes

Wait time: 15 minutes

Ingredients

1 pear

2/3 cup water

1/4 C sugar, minus one or two teaspoons*

1/3 tsp vanilla extract

One scoop vanilla ice cream

A teaspoon or two of chocolate syrup

* I found the full 1/4 cup to be too much, so I reduced it. You can adjust to suit your own taste.

Instructions

Peel the pear, cut it in half lengthwise, and remove the core with a paring knife

Add the water and sugar to a small saucepan and stir the mixture to combine them together

Heat the mixture on medium and bring to a boil

Once it's boiling, add the pear, and reduce the heat to medium-low

Simmer for three minutes, then turn the pear halves over, and simmer another two minutes.

Test to see if they're soft (if they are, a small knife should go through them easily. Add the vanilla extract, stir it into the mixture, and let it all cool for 15-20 minutes.

To serve, place the ice cream on a plate, top with pears, and then drizzle with chocolate syrup.



Treat Your Love to these Delightful, Festive Pastries

By Jasmina Brozovic

If you think you have no baking skills, but would like to surprise your loved one(s) on

Valentine's day, this may be a solution to your problem(s)! Well, some of them, anyway...

With little time and good will, you could make these and surprise even yourself

Puff Pastry Hearts

Ingredients (love potion #9)

All you need is (time, will and a little bit of love):

1 puff pastry sheet bought in the store (you want this quick, right?)

jam of your desire (as tunes to your heart's rhythm)

1 egg (that's kind of a standard ingredient in cakes)

a bit of dark chocolate to sprinkle the hearts (because love is sometimes bitter-sweet)

Preparation (you'll have to work for it)

Though not a lot. You need time to invest in other areas after all.

Roll the puff pastry on a floured surface. Make hearts with the larger heart mould. Spread some jam on one heart, cover with another heart.

Press the edges with a fork to keep the hearts closed. Unless you want broken hearts...

Beat the egg and brush it on the hearts.

Place them on a baking pan covered with parchment paper. Bake in a preheated oven for 10-12 min.

If you desire, melt a bit of dark chocolate on steam and sprinkle with the spoon on the hearts. You can sprinkle them with icing sugar as well. That's that bitter-sweet element we mentioned before

I hope you will try to surprise yourself and make some puffy hearts this Valentine's day.

Enjoy.



This Luscious Bread Pudding is a Great Way to Say I Love You

By Wendy Sigmund

Sharing is caring at this time of year. Since we have to stay in with our sweet hearts this valentines day why not try this yummy concoction to share. One big bowl

and two spoons. It goes lovely with a nice port by the way.

Blueberry Bread Pudding for Two

Ingredients

4 cups stale cubed bread
2 cups heavy cream
4 tablespoons melted butter
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1/4 cup rum
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 cup brown sugar
1/2 cup dried blueberries
4 eggs beaten

Vanilla cream sauce for topping

3/4 cup water
1/2 cup granulated sugar
2 tablespoons cornstarch
2 tablespoons butter
1/4 cup heavy cream
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
Pinch of salt

Instructions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
Place the cubed bread in a large bowl.
In a large pan, blend together the cream, butter, vanilla extract, rum, cinnamon, sugar and blueberries, and heat until simmering. Stir until the sugar is fully dissolved. Remove from the heat and allow the mixture to cool slightly. Add the beaten eggs and stir well.
Slowly pour the mixture over the bread allowing the bread to soak up the mixture, and then pour the bread pudding into a buttered 1 1/2-quart cast iron skillet but any baking dish will due. Bake for 45 minutes until the top of the bread pudding forms a golden crust.
Pour the water into a saucepan and place it over high heat. Bring the water to a boil. In

a small bowl, combine the granulated sugar and cornstarch. Blend well with a whisk or spoon. Add the granulated sugar and cornstarch mixture to the boiling water and whisk to blend thoroughly. Reduce the heat to medium and cook, stirring constantly, until the sauce is thick. Whisk the cream into the thickened sauce. Remove the thickened sauce from the heat and whisk in the butter, vanilla extract, and salt. Whisk until the butter has melted. Strain the sauce to remove any lumps. Spoon or drizzle warm or room temperature vanilla sauce over cake, bread pudding.



This Mini Triple Chocolate Cheesecake is Perfect to Share

By Joy Gordon Stewart

This triple chocolate mini cheesecake is the perfect dessert to split with someone special on Valentine's day. Chocolate cheesecake filling with a chocolate graham cracker crust and topped with a chocolate ganache flavored with citrus-y Earl Grey tea.

Why use Earl Grey with chocolate? It has a light bitterness that enhances the richness of the chocolate. As teas go, Earl Grey is used in particular in chocolate because it's flavored with a citrus extract (bergamot) which is lovely with chocolate.

I made a mini cheesecake so you can enjoy it with a partner or by yourself. With a chocolate crust and a chocolate filling as

well as a chocolate ganache topping, this is definitely a chocolate lover's decadent dessert. The size means this is perfect to treat yourself.

Mini Chocolate Cheesecake with Earl Grey Chocolate Ganache

Makes 4" cheesecake

Crust:

1 Tablespoon butter, melted
1 1/2 Tablespoons sugar
2 (full sheet) chocolate graham crackers, crushed (about 3/4 cup)

Filling:

4 ounces cream cheese, softened
1/4 cup heavy cream
1 1/2 ounces quality chocolate, chopped
1/4 teaspoon vanilla paste
1/4 Tablespoon cornstarch
1 egg
1 Tablespoon sugar

Ganache:

1 1/2 ounces quality chocolate, chopped
2 Tablespoons heavy cream
1/2 Tablespoon clarified butter
1 Earl Grey tea bag

Method:

Assemble the crust: mix together chocolate cracker crumbs and sugar, then add melted butter. Toss until thoroughly combined. Press mixture into the bottom and slightly up the sides of a 4" springform pan. Cover with plastic wrap and set in fridge for one hour.

Use a mixer to cream together eggs, cream cheese, cream, sugar and vanilla.

Preheat the oven to 300F. Fill a roasting pan or large baking dish with 1/2 inch boiling water and place on the lower rack of the oven.

In the microwave in a microwave safe container heat chocolate in 15 second blasts until it is thoroughly melted.

Fold chocolate and cornstarch into cream cheese mixture. Pour mixture over crust in springform. Spread evenly.

Bake for 30-40 minutes at 300.

Allow the cheesecake to chill in the fridge at least one hour before making the ganache topping.

To make the topping: In a tiny saucepan heat cream and steep tea bag for five minutes, or until the taste is noticeable in the cream.

Add hot cream and butter to chopped chocolate and stir until chocolate is thoroughly melted and ganache is smooth and shiny. Pour over cheesecake, spreading with a spatula over the entire surface. Chill in the fridge covered for one hour to set.



This Festive Milk Pudding is the Perfect Way to Show Your Love

By Mayuri Patel

“To love someone deeply gives you strength and to be loved deeply by someone gives you courage.”

This is so true. It's my hubby's love that gives me courage to do what I want. Loving him gives me the strength to overcome any difficulties. My hubby has never been the flowers, chocolates, teddy bear type of person. Yesterday after watching Races we

went for lunch to a famous Italian restaurant. We were sitting next to the very tempting choices of gelato but he didn't ask me if I wanted some as Valentine's Day is around the corner. In all our 34 years of marriage I received only one valentine's card from him and that too when he was away doing his dermatology course. I bet the younger college mates and friends must have advised him to do so. Basically what I'm trying to get across to you all is that he is not the romantic type, he's just too practical and serious. So you may ask "Why don't I do something special?" Well, it usually will go unnoticed, or I would be told why go through all the trouble. Take for example the pudding I made for this post. I took some time and patiently cut out heart shapes from the jelly(not easy when the kitchen's really hot!) and placed a heart on the pudding. The pudding was devoured without any mention of the heart bang in the middle! No 'wow' or 'so sweet'!

Well that doesn't mean he doesn't love me. He has a different way of showing his love and care. I have to look for it and understand it from his every day actions and decisions he takes. It was his suggestion to go and see Raees, not because he loves watching hindi movies(he'd prefer the English action ones) but because he knows that I love watching hindi movies. Choice of an Italian restaurant is not for him but more for me as I love Italian cuisine. Walks on the beach, dipping our feet in the sea, sitting at the quaint little restaurant at Cowrie Shell, taking care of me when I fall sick, ordering food when I don't feel like cooking, carrying my bags when we travel, carrying my shopping bags,

giving me the best seat on the plane etc. are his ways of showing his love for me.

Our is an arranged marriage and sure we've had our shares of ups and downs. Over the years love has grown to such an extent that it hurts to be apart for a period of time. When I was away in Bangalore preparing for my daughter's wedding, I missed him everyday though we skyped, facetimed and called every day, sometimes twice in a day.

So for me love is when I can feel his pain, when I can sense he is thinking deeply, when I know something is bothering him, when I can't bear to see tears in his eyes, when I can rejoice with him and share good times and bad times, I can joke with him, tease him and scold him too. We are poles apart in many ways but we've both accepted each one's passion and traits and worked around them. If that is not love then what is it?

Love for us doesn't mean roses, chocolates, candle light dinners or gifts. It's the everyday little things we do for each other. Sure, I'll prepare his favourite dish on Valentine's Day, because I love to make him happy. But I'll also cut out little jelly hearts for our pudding (even if he doesn't notice), because it is just something that makes me happy.

Milk Pudding with Jelly

Serves 6-8

Ingredients

2½ cups fresh milk, preferably full fat milk

¼ cup sweetened condensed milk
1-2 tbsp sugar *
½ cup water
2 tbsp agar agar flakes or 2 tsp agar agar powder
1 tsp vanilla extract
1 packet of red jelly (red currant, cherry, strawberry or raspberry)

Method

Prepare the jelly as instructed on the packet. Set it in a tray. You want the set jelly to be about 1"- 2" in height.

Sprinkle the agar agar flakes or powder over the water in a small pan and mix. Let it rest for 15 minutes.

Mix milk, condensed milk and sugar in a deep pan.

Put the pan with milk over medium heat till it begins to boil. Stir the milk frequently.

Put the hot milk pan on the side.

Heat the agar agar mixture over low heat.

Stir is constantly till the agar agar dissolves completely.

Add the agar agar mixture to the hot milk.

Add vanilla extract. Mix well.

Pour the milk into serving bowls or glasses.

Put it in the fridge for 3-4 hours till it sets.

Cut heart shaped jelly with a cookie cutter.

Decorate the pudding with the heart shaped jelly.

Alternatively you can add chopped jelly to the serving bowls or glasses.

Pour the milk mixture over it.

Put it in the fridge for 3-4 hours to set.

Serve.

Tips:

* If you are going to set it with the jelly then you may not want to add the sugar as the jelly is sweet.

Use any coloured jelly of your choice to make this cool milk pudding. Try a rose milk flavoured one. I find it's an easy pudding to make and a treat during the hot season.

Use gelatin instead of agar agar if you like.

Serve it with chopped fresh fruit instead of jelly.

Food in the Time of Quarantine Contributors

Azlin Bloor

Contributing Editor

I'm a former chef, culinary instructor and food blogger, with 2 decades of experience in my bag. I specialise in many cuisines, but am especially fond of South East Asian, Middle Eastern and British cooking. "I was born and raised in Singapore in a family as multicultural and multilingual as the United Nations!"

You can find recipes, videos, cooking courses and more at: <https://www.linsfood.com/>

Jasmina Brozovic

Contributing Editor

Jasmina is the author of the 'Beyond the Cake' book. With her husband Zvonimir Fras, she has been writing about Croatian gastronomy and customs on social media, garnering a large audience. Here is what she tells us about herself:

I am a fun loving, cake baking, food cooking, people caring, always dancing, nature enjoying chatterbox! My goal is to get you to enjoy preparing your food with or for the people you care about.

See more of Jasmina's fabulous food at: <https://www.zvonimirfras.com/jasmina/>

Jodi Kaplan

Contributing Editor

One of Jodi's earliest memories is when her mom sat her down in front of the stove, with a big wooden spoon, and told her to stir the chocolate pudding. She was three years old and has been happily cooking and eating ever since.

Cooking for one doesn't have to mean food that's processed or boring. It does have to be good. Because, as Jodi's grandma used to say, "I'm a person too!"

You can find more of Jodi's recipes at <https://singleservingchef.com>.

Mayuri Patel

Contributing Editor

Hi I'm Mayuri Patel, an Indian born and brought up in Kenya. A retired teacher, I began my blog Mayuri's Jikoni in 2012. Started off as a remembrance for my mum from whom I learnt how to cook the basic Gujarati Cuisine. Initially just wanted to jot down recipes that I learnt from her, my mother in law and my aunt. However, requests and interest led to me venturing out from my comfort zone to include recipes from around the world. It soon became an endeavor to make Vegetarian Food more exciting, and a way to portray that vegetarians too enjoy different cuisines from the world over.

Mayuri blogs about her mouthwatering cuisine at: mayurisjikoni.com

Preethi Prasad

Contributing Editor

I am passionate about cooking . A Trade finance professional heading the regional offices you can understand the stress levels. With a hectic work schedule cooking helps me to destress. I have two handsome boys and a very supportive Hubby. My family loves my cooking. I had never thought of starting a food blog even in the wildest of my dreams. My mom always wanted me to start a blog and whenever she raised this topic, I would brush her off. I had a helper all these years, and never bothered about cooking as it was taken care off by her. I used to cook once in a while, when I felt like or there was a demand for my signature dish. My helper left in September 2013 and since then I have taken over the realm of my kitchen. Kitchen has become my favourite place these days. I am starting this blog to document my recipes for the benefit of everybody. Being a Vegetarian, you will find mostly Vegetarian recipes here along with few recipes using eggs on special request from some of my friends. Most of them will not be on the Restaurant menu. You will find many uncommon but healthy and Yummy Recipes.

You can find more of Preethi's wonderful food at: <https://preethicuisine.com/>

Indrani Sen

Contributing Editor

I am a foodie, recipe developer, food blogger, food writer,
Data Scientist, corporate trainer in Data Science and Machine Learning. I am a

mother to my daughter and love cooking food for family and friends!

blog://www.indrani-will-teach.com/

Twitter: @indraniwillteach

Instagram: @indraniwillteach

Wendy Sigmund

Contributing Editor

Wendy is the publisher and founder of the [Santa Cruz Mountain Bulletin](#). She also blogs about living off the grid, gardening and cooking at her blog, [Santa Cruz Mountain Mama](#). She teaches History at San Lorenzo Valley High. She is the mother of two wonderful sons two dogs, two cats and turtle in the Santa Cruz Mountains and grows fruits and vegetables.

Joy Gordon Stewart

Editor in Chief

I am mother to two young boys and I love to cook for my family, especially from ingredients sourced from my mountain home. I've been blogging about food at The Joyous Kitchen for almost a decade. I worked in catering for over a decade. I love to cook and write recipes and share them with everyone!

You can find more of my recipes at: www.joyoukitchen.blogspot.com

Giangi Townsend

Contributing Editor

Like many working moms across the world, I was caught up in the madness searching for healthy ways to feed my family and had limited time to spend in my kitchen during the work week. I was struggling to find easy, simple and fast recipes that combined gourmet creativity and healthy eating.

As a result, I started creating as well as modifying recipes to allow me to make them in less than 45 minutes.

I had no idea that so many people were in the same boat as me and wanted to create quick and easy meals for everyday cooking using simple, fresh and whole food ingredients. What started out as a personal pastime has emerged into a thriving digital platform, with so much room for growth.

See more of Giangi's fabulous food at: Giangiskitchen.com

Balvinder Ubi

Contributing Editor

I'm simply someone who finds pleasure and satisfaction in cooking and creating healthy gluten free recipes that anyone can enjoy! Having grown up in India and now settled in Canada, my recipes reflect my exposure to different cultures and cuisines.

You can find more of Balvinder's delicious recipes at: <https://www.simpleglutenfreekitchen.com/>

Lisa Watson

Contributing Editor

Lisa grew up on a sheep farm in New Zealand. As soon as she was able, she followed the gravel road with grass growing down the middle of it that started outside the gate and left to discover the world. Many adventures and countries later, she now lives in France with her Italian husband. She writes whenever she can and travels as often as possible. Lisa has a blog called www.italiankiwi.com that she feeds with posts every so often.