

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Scrumptious Love: A Heart-Healthy Valentine's Day
The Top Three Heart-Healthy Aphrodisiacs from the Natural Gourmet Institute

New York, January X, 2013—Appropriately enough, Valentine's Day falls right in the middle of American Heart Month. In honor of both the holiday of love and the month of heart health, the chefs at NGI have listed their top three heart-healthy foods that are also aphrodisiacs. This year, forget unsustainably produced oysters or boxes of processed chocolate—instead, show your love by helping to keep your loved one healthy!

Tomato

What about it?

The French called the tomato the “love apple” in the 16th century. They were referring to its appearance—red and heart-shaped, with crisp skin and luscious juicy insides—but today we know that tomatoes are also an excellent source of lycopene, which benefits virility and prostate health. Lycopene, that delightful nutrient, also increases the amount of HDL cholesterol (good cholesterol), which is great for heart health.

How should I prepare it?

If you live somewhere where you can get fresh, local tomatoes in February, cut them into slices and serve them on their own (or with avocado in between) with a drizzle of balsamic vinegar and a sprinkle of pepper, or chop them up and toss them with cucumbers, peppers, oil and vinegar. If fresh, local tomatoes aren't available in your area, you can also make a sauce from tomato paste and fresh tomato juice and use it to top a delicious dish of whole-wheat pasta or even spaghetti squash.

Avocado

What about it?

Unique among fruits, avocados contain a good dose of heart-healthy mono- and polyunsaturated fats. In addition, avocado is an undeniably sensuous fruit, soft and slippery on the tongue. Avocados also deliver a bundle of nutrients essential to sexual health, including beta carotene, magnesium and vitamin E!

How should I prepare it?

Avocados are best served raw, and can be combined with the aforementioned tomato for an arousing and heart-healthy salad—just slice them both and alternate avocado and tomato slices and drizzle oil and vinegar on top, or sprinkle your favorite spices (cayenne is a nice, fiery option). Alternatively, whip up some guacamole with avocado, tomato, lime, cilantro, garlic and onions—just go easy on the last two if you'll be spending the night smooching!

Dark Chocolate

What about it?

Long touted as an aphrodisiac, it's important to stress that the benefits of chocolate are related to the nutrients in the cocoa bean, which are canceled out by the amount of milk, sugar, nougat, caramel, etc., that fill the average sampler box. Dark chocolate contains flavanols that have an antioxidant effect, reducing the cell damage implicated in heart disease, and it's also a natural source of **phenyl ethylamine (PEA)**, the same feel-good chemical that the body naturally produces during those first moments of falling in love.

How should I prepare it?

First, choose only dark chocolate with a cocoa content of 65 percent or higher. Melt it and drizzle it on top of fruit, make chocolate-covered strawberries and cherries, or use it as a topping on frozen yogurt. Here is a recipe for Oaxacan-inspired truffles that are to die for!

Oaxacan-Inspired Truffles

Yield: 15- 1 teaspoon size truffles

Ingredients:

½ cup coconut milk
1 tablespoon coconut oil
¼ teaspoon ground Mexican cinnamon
¼ teaspoon vanilla extract
Pinch sea salt

8 ounces good quality bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped or ground

Items to roll truffles -all placed. On small separate plates

½ cup sliced almonds, chopped or ground
½ cup dried coconut
¼ cup pumpkin seeds, chopped or ground
2 tablespoons dried chili powder combined with 1tablespoon maple crystals

Procedure:

Line 1 standard sized baking sheet with parchment paper

1. In a small heavy bottomed pot combine coconut milk coconut oil, cinnamon, extract and salt. Heat on a low flame until mixture just comes to a boil.
2. Place ground chocolate in a medium bowl. Pour the hot mixture over the chocolate (make sure the chocolate is completely covered by the mixture). Let mixture sit 2-3 minutes. Using a whisk, blend ingredients together (there should be no lumps).
3. Place mixture in refrigerator 15-20 minutes or until mixture firms up enough to hold a shape when it is scooped out of the bowl.
4. Using a tablespoon sized spoon scoop out mixture .It will be soft but firm enough to quickly roll in either nuts, coconut, chili powder or a combination of all. Truffles will be small and rustic looking.
5. Place truffles on baking sheet. Place in refrigerator and allow to firm up. Serve chilled.

About Natural Gourmet Institute for Food and Health

Founded in 1977 by Annemarie Colbin, Ph.D., Natural Gourmet Institute (NGI) is the leader in teaching health-supportive cooking as well as elucidating the relationship between food and health. NGI believes that what we eat significantly affects our physical, mental and spiritual well being.

The Natural Gourmet Institute for Food and Health offers excellent learning opportunities to the general public. Through a combination of cooking classes and lectures, NGI teaches health-supportive food preparation, as well as an ever-expanding array of approaches to nutrition, including models from Western nutrition, Chinese medicine, macrobiotics, raw foods, fermentations, Ayurveda and more.

The Natural Gourmet Institute for Health & Culinary Arts Chef's Training Program was created in 1987 in response to the demand for culinary professionals skilled in the art of preparing beautiful, delicious health-supportive cuisine. This accredited, comprehensive, mostly-vegetarian program—the only one of its kind in the world—prepares students for careers in health spas, restaurants, bakeries, private cooking, catering, teaching, consulting, food writing and a variety of entrepreneurial pursuits.

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