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February 9, 2005

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## Aphrodisiacs in the kitchen: Red-hot romance starts here

By **SARAH VICKERS**  
SENTINEL CORRESPONDENT

Roses are red, violets are blue, flowers can be sweet ... but food is more likely to get your lover in the mood.

If you're looking for extra zing in your love life, forget flowers or jewelry this Valentine's Day. Head to the grocery store and pick up the ingredients for romantic success.

According to chef Robert Meyers-Lussier, the road to romance is paved with tastebuds.

"One of my goals is to affect people's lives and Valentine's is a great time to do that," he said. "When it comes to food, you can create a wonderful mood and a romantic evening."

Meyers-Lussier's relationship with food dates back to his childhood. He decided to take his obsession to the next level when he saw the film "Babette's Feast" while stationed in West Germany with the U.S. Army.

The food enthusiast decided to share his love for the culinary in his cooking show, "Talking with Your Mouth Full," and his new cookbook, "This is Delicious, What is it?: An Eclectic Collection of International Comfort Foods."

According to Meyers-Lussier, comfort is a prerequisite for romance.

"Since I'm in comfort Advertisement foods, I am already halfway there," he said.

From texture and aroma to visual appearance, a sensual food experience uses the five senses, according to the chef.

"A lot of it is about the way you feel when you eat," he said. "Take a truffle, for instance. It melts the minute you

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put it in your mouth and when it hits your tongue, it is like an explosion."

Mood-enhancing foods, according to the Meyers-Lussier, stimulate the mind and the sex drive. Adding vanilla, chocolate or coffee to a dessert can produce amazing results.

"Beef is another one of those things considered an aphrodisiac," he said. "High-protein food enhances the chemical reactions in the body."

Named after the Greek goddess of love Aphrodite, aphrodisiacs are foods said to enhance pleasure or romance.

People have searched for the perfect love potion for thousands of years. Greek botanist Theophrastus concocted the first recorded culinary aphrodisiac in 400 B.C. Recommending a leafy plant called mandrake soaked in vinegar, the botanist claimed the recipe created a sensation of "feeling high."

Ancient Indian recipes claimed brews of black pepper, honey, chili peppers and mandrake worked the sex drive. Apicus, the writer of the first cookbook, swore by a stew of onions, pine kernels, and herbs.

This year, Meyers-Lussier plans to host a Valentine's dinner fit for royalty. Beginning with an olive and fennel hors d'oeuvre, the chef will follow with a candied chicken wing appetizer, orange tomato basil soup, fruit spinach salad and Thai red beef curry.

"The spice gets the heart rate up," he said.

For Meyers-Lussier, designing a meal is like perfecting an opening night performance. And his grand finale will surely receive a standing ovation.

"The White Chocolate-Dark Chocolate Cheesecake is the ultimate," he said. "Of all the desserts I make, it's my No. 1."

So if you want to enchant that special someone on Feb. 14, try one of Meyers-Lussier's recipes, dim the lights, lift your fork and let the magic happen.

**White Chocolate Dark Chocolate Cheesecake**

- CRUST:**  
**3 cups chocolate wafer cookie crumbs**  
**¼ cup sugar**  
**10 Tbsps. butter**  
**FILLING:**  
**2½ lbs. cream cheese, softened**  
**1¼ cups sugar**  
**¼ cup flour**  
**1 tsp. vanilla**  
**5 lg. eggs**  
**2 lg. egg yolks**  
**¼ cup half and half**  
**8 ozs. white chocolate, melted, cooled**  
**GLAZE:**  
**¼ cup light corn syrup**  
**3 Tbsps. water**



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**2 Tbsps. butter**  
**1 cup semisweet chocolate chips**

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

For crust: Mix cookie crumbs and sugar in medium bowl. Add melted butter and stir to blend.

Press mixture onto the bottom and up the sides of a 9- or 10- inch spring form pan.

Refrigerate while preparing filling.

For filling: Using the electric mixer, beat cream cheese in large bowl until smooth.

Add sugar, flour and vanilla and beat until well blended

Add eggs and yolks, one at a time, beating until just blended after each addition (too much beating results in a cracked surface).

Stir in half and half. Fold in white chocolate.

Pour mixture into crust. Bake for 10 minutes.

Lower oven temperature to 300 degrees. Bake 60 minutes longer or until filling is set. Turn oven off and let set in oven an hour longer.

Remove from oven. Let cool at room temperature at least an hour, then refrigerate until ready to glaze.

For glaze:

Stir corn syrup, water and butter in heavy medium saucepan until butter melts. Bring to a boil.

Remove from heat and add chocolate. Whisk until melted and smooth. Cool slightly, about 15 minutes.

Pour over top of completely cooled cheesecake. Smooth into a pleasant pattern. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Once ready to serve, wait 15 minutes to soften.

*Recipe reprinted with permission of Bob Meyers-Lussier.*

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