



Foods of Love

Bill Bradley, Registered Dietitian and Cookbook Author

Getting through winter with a good mood intact can be quite the challenge. This is just one of the reasons I appreciate celebrating Valentine's Day in February. What a pleasant diversion from the snow and chill (usually!), with an added bonus: a post-holiday season opportunity to whip up delicious treats. I've always avoided the restaurant scene, choosing to escape the crowds and long waits for a table. Instead, I prefer to create my own romantic dinner at home and save money too!

This year I'll be turning Valentine's Day into an extra special affair by hosting a potluck brunch and inviting family and friends. As I started working on my menu, I decided to bring foods associated with love and kindness to the table. Perhaps you would like to prepare "love food" on Valentine's Day? Here are a few loving foods you can consider for your table.

Pineapple

Pineapple has long been a symbol of hospitality and welcome by the Caribbean people. Early in US history, we adopted this symbol and many southern tables were graced with a pineapple prominently placed at the center. Pineapple has become a symbol of hospitality in many nations. It also has been a symbol of luxury, as it wasn't always as readily available as it is today. A serving of fresh pineapple or a dish prepared with pineapple

was a special treat. You can now enjoy fresh or frozen pineapple anytime.

Try my refreshing Pineapple and Orange Smoothie for a great start to your morning. I'll be serving this for Valentine's brunch, perhaps with a bit of champagne. Here is the [quick and easy recipe](#).

Pomegranate

The pomegranate is a thing of beauty, so it's not difficult to see why it would be a symbol of love. In Greek mythology, the pomegranate was regarded as a symbol of marriage and life. In some cultures, it has also been known to represent brotherhood and togetherness because of its interior filled with tightly packed fruit.

I love Pomegranate Compote, which I'll be serving with turkey. I think you'll love it too. Remember, turkey isn't just for Thanksgiving, it is a special dish that can be enjoyed any time of year. Visit Mediterranean Living for the [compote recipe](#).

Nuts

Nuts have a hard, protective covering which, in many cultures, symbolizes a strong marriage. There are many references to varieties of nuts being associated with love, including hazelnuts, almonds and chestnuts. I love nuts for their delicious taste and health benefits. They are certainly welcome at my table.

Walnuts play a leading role in this flavorful Honey Walnut Salad. The addition of feta, raisins (or dried cranberries) plus a great Dijon dressing make for a perfect salad that will not be left on its own to wilt. Exactly what you need for Valentine's Day festivities. Check out the recipe [here](#).

Lemons

When life gives you lemons... celebrate! Lemons are a symbol of eternal love. They are also a symbol of purification and friendship. They are particularly celebrated along the Amalfi coast in Italy, where they are grown in abundance. You will find shops in Sorrento packed with souvenirs emblazoned with lemons.

Lemon is used in many delicious recipes across the world. You can't go wrong adding a lemony flavor to your food preparations. It's stellar combined with olive oil. I enjoy a salad with just a sprinkling of olive oil and a splash of fresh lemon juice. Simply delicious! Here is one of my favorite recipes using lemon: Chicken Tagine with Lemon and Olives, courtesy of Bill Bradley of Mediterranean Living. This dish uses sliced lemons and is full of flavor.

Check out this recipe that makes a meal [here](#).

Basil

In Italy, as in India, basil is a symbol of love. Basil is also a symbol of good wishes. In Italy, a man might wear a sprig of basil in his hair to draw the attention of a woman he loves. And a woman would place a pot of basil outside her door to show she is ready to meet her lover. Basil is also seen as a symbol of friendship in modern times. Traditionally, it is a kind gesture to gift bunches of basil or basil plants to a new neighbor.

Show your love with my lovely Basil, Scallion and Pistachio recipe. This recipe is prepared in a rustic fashion and is delicious with plenty of extra virgin olive oil to dip your bread in. It's an easy recipe that looks impressive to your brunch guests.

Here is the recipe at [Mediterranean Living](#).

Honey

It should come as no surprise that sweet honey is a food of love. It is a central food (and medicine) in Greek culture, going back to ancient times. Honey is a symbol of love in Greece, Italy and in Nordic cultures. Honey is associated with love in many ways: in dreams, in gemstones (honey jade) and in the use of honey as a term of endearment.

There are many wonderful desserts that feature honey. And, it is lovely simply drizzled over fruit as a healthy snack. Greek Pastelli is a special small sweet. Featuring honey and lots of sesame seeds, it makes a nice healthier alternative to a peanut brittle. This is a recipe created by Koula Barydakis, who teaches traditional cooking on the island of Crete.

Try this tasty treat [here](#).

Dark Chocolate

Last, but not least, we have chocolate. Chocolate is strongly associated with love and is clearly a popular gift on Valentine's Day. In my town, the lines are very long at the best chocolate shops. It's no wonder chocolate is associated with love as it contains various elements that produce feelings of love, euphoria and an overall feeling of well-being. I think I should be eating chocolate more often! Need more reasons to indulge? Dark chocolate is also shown to reduce blood pressure, improve circulation, and most importantly, reduce stress. Generally speaking, the darker the chocolate is, the healthier it is for you. Indulging in a few small squares a day will do your body good, just be careful not to eat the whole bar!

I love all of the recipes over at the Chocolate & Zucchini website- especially this easy 5-ingredient recipe for Gluten-Free Chocolate Cookies.

Try the recipe over at [Chocolate & Zucchini](#).

I hope you enjoy trying these foods of love and have a happy Valentine's Day!

