RED MAKES THE TABLE SWEET

Valentine’s Day brings images of red roses, heart shaped boxes of chocolate, a special date, romantic dinners, and time spent with someone you love. Sounds delightful, but for those with children, the reality is there may be little time or money for a special Valentine date with your mate. Try a new way of celebrating….prepare a delicious family dinner with everyone’s favorite things to eat. Make it fancy, special, and memorable. Use a red tablecloth. Serve your feast on the fancy crystal and china that never gets used and don’t forget the candles. Your kids will love being treated like royalty.

What to serve? While the setting may be fancy, the food doesn’t have to be. Ask family members for suggestions…you might be in for a surprise. For those with gourmet tastes, try a new recipe. Make the event an excuse to purchase a new food item you’ve always wanted to try or take a trip to the bakery for some freshly made bread or dessert.

If you’re looking for a menu theme, think pink or red. Possible fruits are red apples, blood oranges, cherries, cranberries, red grapes, pink/red grapefruit, red pears, pomegranates, raspberries, strawberries, and watermelon. Vegetable choices include beets, kidney beans, pinto beans, red lentils, red cabbage, red peppers, radishes, radicchio, red onions, red potatoes, rhubarb, and tomatoes. Salmon makes a great red entrée and anything with tomatoes like lasagna.

Dessert can be simple…a jiggly bowl of red jello with whipped topping, strawberry ice cream, raspberry sherbet or serve fresh red fruits dipped in our non-fat fudge sauce. A fun idea is to make red velvet cupcakes from a mix, and let the kids decorate with candy hearts and red sprinkles. For a special beverage offer sparkling grape juice or sparkling apple cider in festive glasses or ice cream floats made with cherry coke. Your kids will love it.

It is the sweet, simple things of life that make life special, so make Valentine’s Day sweet!
RYAN’S LASAGNA

This is my son Ryan’s favorite dish and a great way to use up the variety of cheeses in the fridge.
When quizzed about his favorite meal he told me lasagna and asked me if I could make the real deal. I had always relied on pre-made frozen. This dish is simple to make and much tastier!

3/4 pound ground beef
3/4 pound sausage
1 bottle of your favorite spaghetti/tomato sauce
3/4 pound mozzarella cheese, shredded
1/4 pound hard Italian cheese – asiago, Romano, parmesan
1 (16 oz.) container cottage cheese
2 eggs
12 ounces no-boil lasagna noodles

Brown ground beef and sausage. Drain well to remove excess fat. Add meat to tomato sauce. Grate cheeses and mix together. Add to cottage cheese, eggs and one cup of shredded cheese. Layer in baking dish meat sauce, egg mixture, and lasagna noodles. You can use less noodles depending on preference. Top with shredded cheese and bake for 50-60 minutes in 350°F oven. Let sit for 10 minutes before cutting.

SINFULLY RICH NONFAT FUDGE SAUCE

1/2 cup sugar
1/4 cup cocoa
1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon cornstarch
1/2 cup evaporated skim milk
2 teaspoons vanilla extract

In a small saucepan, stir together sugar, cocoa, and cornstarch; stir in evaporated milk. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly with whisk, until mixture boils; continue cooking and stirring until sauce is thickened and smooth. Remove from heat; stir in vanilla extract. Serve warm or cold. Refrigerate any leftover sauce in a covered container. Makes 7 servings, 2 tablespoons per serving.

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