

Serve Him A Sexy Supper

Cook A Romantic (And Easy-To-Make!) Meal For You And Your Main Dish!

We knew that wine, candlelight and really good food were the recipe for romance—but to get some real cooking tips, we found that we were just a few simple ingredients from creating an intimate evening at home. Try it for yourself! Recipes are included, along with a step-by-step look at how intoxicating this food can be for you and your sweetheart. Loved one not included.

SETTING THE SCENE

Lights, candlelight, action! Before you preheat your oven, preheat your living space to make it as romantic as possible. All it takes is a little song, a little wine and a whole lot of fun...

Be My Guest

Just because you and your honey are staying in tonight doesn't mean you can't have a formal date! Instead of calling your guy to invite him over for dinner, try sending him a handmade invitation, e-vite or, if you're feeling especially

celebratory, a hand-delivered invite via a messenger service.

A Little Night Music

A little background music can go a long way when it comes to creating passion. You can opt for a romantic, classical feel or pop in a CD that fits with the theme of what you're cooking (wouldn't a few tunes from Ole' Blue Eyes go perfectly with that pasta you're whipping up?). Test out the volume before your honey heads over, though—you want your music to give romance a head-start, and not give you both a headache.

Mood Lighting

If your dining area has a dimmer switch, you're set—just crank the lights down to what you feel is the appropriate level of intimate illumination. But if you're not so blessed and are working with a standard flip-up/flip-down switch, you can just enjoy the gentle glow of a candle—or two, or three or however many you like. Be sure to place them somewhere that won't be highly trafficked by elbows, though, so your passion is the only thing set aflame during dinner!

Dress for Success

You may be preparing this meal in the comfort of your own kitchen, but that doesn't mean you have to eat in your hang-around-the-house casual wear. Make this an excuse to dress up and think va-va-va-voom sexy! Clothing should be soft and feminine (and comfortable... after all, you do have to cook tonight)—and don't forego doing



SALAD MARINATED GOAT CHEESE & GREENS SALAD

.25 oz white wine
1 tsp minced shallots or white part of scallions (an onion-like green)
1 tsp mixed herbs (basil, chervil, parsley)
3 oz. soft goat cheese
4 oz. arugula salad greens
1 yellow tomato, sliced

DRESSING

.5 oz red wine vinegar
1 tsp minced shallots
1 oz. extra virgin olive oil
salt and pepper, to taste

Combine white wine, shallots and herbs to create a marinade. Place goat cheese in bowl and coat with marinade; allow to sit in refrigerator for at least 30 minutes. To make the dressing, whisk together red wine vinegar, shallots, salt and pepper.

To assemble each salad, arrange arugula in center of plate. Remove goat cheese from marinade. Using an oval ice cream scoop (or two teaspoons held together like a scoop), scoop one oval of goat cheese in front of arugula. Arrange slices of tomato next to arugula. Drizzle everything with dressing. Serve with crackers or pears if desired.



APPETIZER RUFFLED SMOKED SALMON WITH PUMPERNICKEL TOAST

4 oz. thinly sliced smoked salmon
2 slices pumpernickel bread, toasted
2 bunches mache or watercress greens
3 oz. sour cream
1 lemon
salt and pepper, to taste

Cut each piece of toast into smaller slices. Arrange salmon in center of serving plate, with toast on one side. Zest 1/3 of the lemon. (To zest, use a "zester" or sharp knife to slice away thin, tiny sections of yellow outside portion of peel; avoid the white part of the peel.) Mix peel with sour cream, salt and pepper. Use the rest of the lemon to make wedges and place on serving plate, opposite toast. Add greens in a decorative manner.



SAWBRIDGE STUDIOS

Love the furniture designs featured in these photos? Check out Chicago's Sawbridge Studios, 153 W. Ohio, an eclectic and utterly hip home furnishings store that features handmade pieces by artisans from across the country. Some of the pieces showcased in our photo shoot include plates by Simon Pearce Pottery, dining room table by Kevin Kopil Furniture Design and candlesticks by Scott Nells. For more information on Sawbridge Studios, call (312) 828-0055, contact the store's Winnetka, Illinois, location (1015 Tower Court) at (847) 441-2441 or visit their Web site, www.sawbridge.com.

Photographer: Arida, Hair & makeup: Randy Wieder/Elly's Artists @ Ellis Chicago, Fashion styling: Dan Deister/Arta, Models: Luciana Lovach and Christian Anderson for Arta. Models in photos used to illustrate story only.



In general, winespectator.com suggests pairing hearty food with a hearty wine (for example, zesty Italian food goes great with a rich red wine) because such food will make lighter wine taste lifeless. Lighter wines go well with lighter meals.

All In The Presentation

You can cook the most fabulous meal, but without the right display, the food isn't half as good! Invest in a new runner for your table or candles to play up the theme of your meal—elegant candelabra-type displays for French cuisine or a basic, bright color for nouveau American cuisine. You can find creative items at a variety of stores.

Dessert Drinks

Before you get cordial with your man, try a cordial! Drinks such as Bailey's on the rocks,

brandy or coffee mixed with Kahlua top off a great meal. A sweet treat drink is a wonderful way to move from the dinner table, to the couch to...well, we all know where you're headed after that. Which reminds us: Make sure your bedroom is clean! There's nothing to kill the atmosphere like laundry on the floor. **CW**



HELPING HANDS

If you're looking for a little more guidance, there are some books out there that will help you make it a perfect dinner date night. Featuring lush photos, easy-to-understand directions and a multitude of recipes, the cookbooks from housewares haven Williams-Sonoma's cookbook collection are a must-have for any casual chef. Three tasty offerings: *Salads* (Simon & Schuster, \$16.95), a bible on what to do with your bed of greens; *Fish* (Simon & Schuster, \$16.95), featuring classic and new recipes for cooking our friends with fins and *Dessert* (Simon & Schuster, \$16.95), featuring dozens of gooey-and-good finales to any meal.

DESSERT

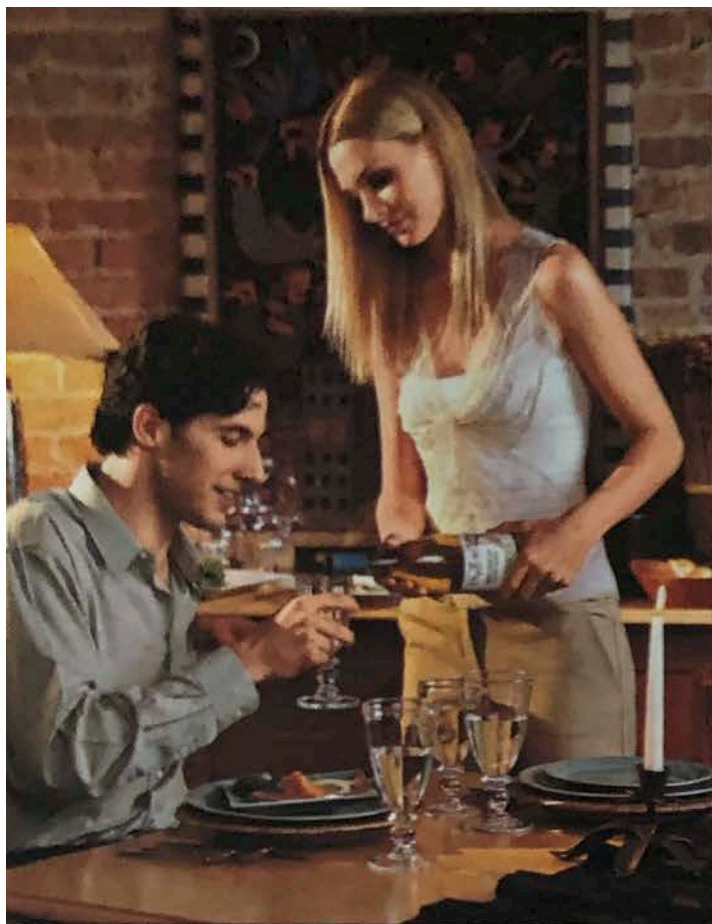
ROASTED PEACHES WITH SORBET

- 2 whole peaches, washed, cut in half and pitted
- 2 oz. lavender honey or plain honey
- .5 oz. balsamic vinegar
- 1 T unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- 1 T unsalted butter, cold
- aluminum foil
- 4 oz. purchased lemon sorbet

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Slice two very thin slices from one half of one peach; set aside for garnish.

Line a cookie or baking sheet with aluminum foil. Grease foil by placing 1 T softened butter in center, then use a clean paper towel to gently smear butter over all portions of foil. Mix honey and vinegar together in a bowl. Place peaches in bowl and coat with mixture. Place peaches cut side down on foil-covered baking sheet; pour remaining honey mixture over peaches. Cut cold butter in small pieces and sprinkle over peaches. Place sheet on middle rack in oven and bake for 10 minutes.

To assemble each plate, place two peach halves in center, one cut side up, one cut side down. Drizzle with honey mixture from bottom of baking sheet. Place a scoop of lemon sorbet in center of cut-side-up peach. Place one fresh peach slice on top of sorbet. If desired, sprinkle with fresh mint for additional garnish.



your hair and makeup just because you're at home! Think about how easy touch-ups will be with the bathroom just feet away.

Sweet Scents of Success

If the food cooking in the oven isn't giving off a sweet enough scent, try adding some potpourri or scented candles with aromas men are reportedly drawn to, like vanilla and pumpkin spice.

SERVING UP ROMANCE

Even if you're not a gourmet cook, you can still create a seductive dinner—with the right tips and tricks...

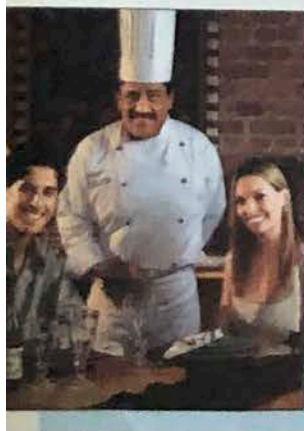
Oven Anxious

If you're concerned about the actual cooking, don't be: The

recipes we've chosen are very simple, with ingredients you can find at any grocery store. But if you're still hesitant to slap on that apron, consider your options: You can have the meal catered (small meals aren't as expensive as you'd think!) or pick up entrees-to-go from a local restaurant. There is dignity in microwaving.

Wine Time

Wondering how to pick the perfect wine? "The first thing to remember about matching food and wine is to forget the rules," says winespector.com. "Just choose a wine that you want to drink by itself. You will probably drink most of the wine without the benefit of food—either before the food is served or after you've finished your meal."



BLUE PLATE CATERING

When we were looking for some expert advice in the kitchen, we went right to our friends at Chicago's Blue Plate Catering, 1061 W. Van Buren, for some quick-and-quickening recipes! Chef Eduardo Zavala created and prepared the food items featured in this article—and so can you, at home! For more information on Blue Plate, one of Chicago's finest food preparation services (with a staff that's 75% female!), call (312) 421-6666 or visit Blue Plate's Web site, www.blueplatechicago.com.



ENTRÉE

For a taste of success, try these deceptively simple recipes...the results may look gourmet, but the cooking is easy to get done!

MARINATED CHICKEN WITH POTATOES

CHICKEN

- 2 six oz., boneless, skinless chicken breasts (note: this dish can also be made with halibut fish filets; see smaller photo above)
- fresh fennel herb
- 2 oz. red radishes, thinly sliced
- 1 chayote (pear-shaped vegetable), julienned (to julienne, cut into thin, stick-like pieces)
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. each ground cumin and coriander
- .5 oz. each lime, grapefruit and orange juices
- 1 tsp. chopped garlic
- .5 oz. chopped shallots
- 1 T chopped Italian parsley
- 2.5 oz. extra virgin olive oil

POTATOES

- 8 oz. fingerling or new potatoes
- 1 T salt

Prepare the marinated chicken.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. To prepare the marinade for the chicken, mix radishes and chayote with kosher salt; let sit for five minutes. Divide radish mixture in half. Mix remaining chicken ingredients (except for chicken); add to 1/2 of radish mixture. (Note: Remaining half of radish mixture will be used for garnish.) Pour marinade over chicken and let sit for one hour. Remove chicken from marinade and bake in a lightly greased baking dish for 12-15 minutes or until chicken is done.

Prepare the potatoes.

Scrub potatoes under running cold water until clean. Add salt to a large pot of water; bring water to a boil. Leaving the peel on, add whole potatoes to the boiling water and cook until tender (to test, carefully remove one potato from the water and insert the tip of a thin-blade knife. The knife should go into the potato with ease). Allow potatoes to cool slightly and slice into approximately 1/4" to 1/2" slices.

To assemble each plate, place potatoes in center. Slice one chicken breast in half and place both halves on top of potatoes. Add 1/2 of remaining radish mixture over top of chicken. Garnish with fresh fennel if desired.