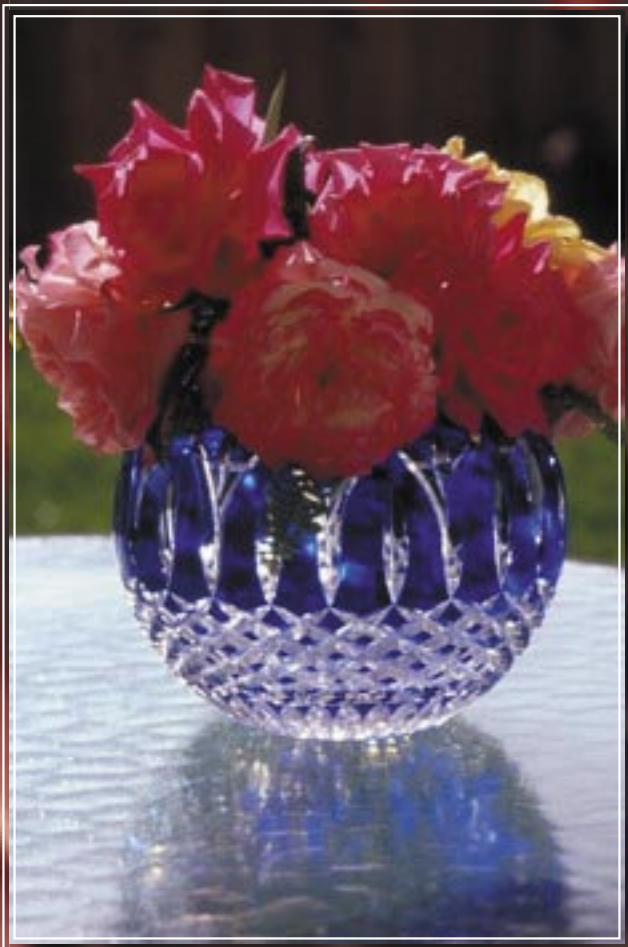


VALENTINE
RECIPES FOR
YOUR
LOVED ONES

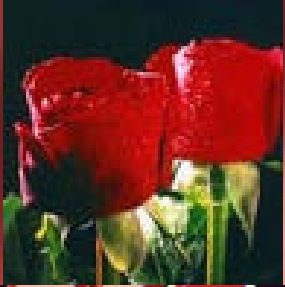


By Judi Godsey



Valentine Truffles

- 12 ounces semisweet chocolate, cut up
- 1/4 cup whipping cream
- 1 tablespoon orange, raspberry, cherry, or coffee liqueur or whipping cream
- 36 hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, unblanched whole almonds, pecan halves, and/or walnut halves (optional)
- Chopped nuts, powdered sugar, and/or unsweetened cocoa powder (optional)
- 8 ounces chocolate- or vanilla-flavored candy coating, cut up (optional)
- 2 ounces chocolate- or pink vanilla-flavored candy coating (optional)



In heavy medium saucepan combine chocolate and the 1/4 cup whipping cream. Cook over low heat for 4 to 5 minutes or until chocolate melts, stirring frequently. Remove from heat. Transfer to a mixing bowl. Refrigerate about 30 minutes or until mixture is slightly cool to the touch. Stir in liqueur or the 1 tablespoon whipping cream. Beat with an electric mixer on low speed for 3 to 4 minutes or until stiff. Line a baking sheet with waxed paper. Shape chocolate mixture into 1-inch balls. If desired, press a whole or half nut into center of each ball; reroll until smooth. Place on prepared baking sheet. Freeze about 15 minutes or until firm. If desired, roll balls in chopped nuts, powdered sugar, and/or cocoa powder. Or, in heavy small saucepan heat and stir the 8 ounces candy coating over low heat until melted and smooth. Quickly coat truffles, one at a time, with coating; let excess coating drip off. Place truffles on prepared baking sheet. Let stand about 30 minutes or until set. If desired, in small heavy saucepan heat and stir the 2 ounces candy coating over low heat until melted and smooth. Cool slightly. Transfer to a small freezer bag; snip a tiny piece off one corner. Pipe coating onto truffles. Makes about 36 truffles

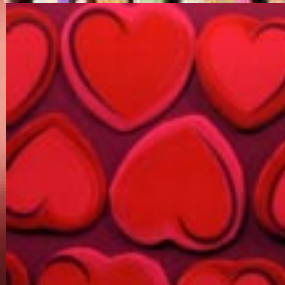


Valentine Chocolate Torte

- 14 ounces bittersweet or semisweet chocolate, coarsely chopped
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/4 cup milk
- 5 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup seedless red raspberry jam
- 1-1/2 to 2 cups fresh raspberries
- Sifted powdered sugar (optional)



Grease the bottom of an 8-inch heart-shape cake pan with a removable bottom or an 8-inch round springform pan; set pan aside. In a heavy medium saucepan combine chocolate, butter, and milk. Cook and stir over low heat until chocolate is melted. Remove from heat; cool mixture for 20 minutes. In a mixing bowl beat eggs and vanilla with an electric mixer on low speed until combined. Add granulated sugar and flour; beat on high speed for 10 minutes. Stir chocolate mixture into egg mixture. Pour batter into prepared pan. Bake in a 325 ° oven for 30 minutes (35 minutes for springform pan) or until outer one-third of top is slightly puffed. (Because this torte is so dense, you're unable to use a traditional cake doneness test. The torte should be done after 30 minutes, even though the center will still appear to be underbaked.) Cool torte on a wire rack for 20 minutes. Use a knife dipped in warm water to loosen torte from sides of pan. Cool torte thoroughly. Remove sides of pan. Wrap torte in foil; chill overnight or up to 2 days. To serve, bring torte to room temperature. In a small saucepan melt jam; cool. Spread jam on top of torte. Cover jam with raspberries, stem sides down. If desired, before serving, dust with powdered sugar. Makes 16 servings



Lollipop Hearts

2-1/2- to 3-1/2-inch round or heart-shaped metal cookie cutters
8 ounces assorted red, pink, and/or clear hard candies
35 to 60 (2 to 3 ounces) assorted small decorative candies, such as red cinnamon candies, small nonpareils, colored candy hearts, spice drops, and gumdrops
Edible rose petals or other flower petals (optional)
Lollipop sticks

Place unwrapped hard candies in a heavy plastic bag, then place bag on top of folded towel and crush candies into small chunks with meat mallet or small hammer. Make only three or four lollipops at one time. Line a baking sheet with foil. Place desired cookie cutters on foil, at least 2 inches apart. Divide crushed candies evenly among cutters, approximately 1 1/2 to 2 tablespoons per lollipop. Candy layer should be 1/4 to 1/2 inch thick. Add small decorative candies or edible rose or other flower petals to crushed candies. (If using flower petals, make sure they are covered with a layer of the crushed candy.) Bake in a 350 ° oven for 6 to 8 minutes or until candies are completely melted. Cool 30 seconds. Remove cookie cutters with tongs, allowing melted candy to spread slightly. Quickly attach a stick to base of each lollipop, twisting the stick to cover lollipop end with melted candy. If desired, press more small candies or flower petals into hot lollipops. Cool. Peel foil from lollipops. Makes 8.

Marshmallow-Popcorn Hearts

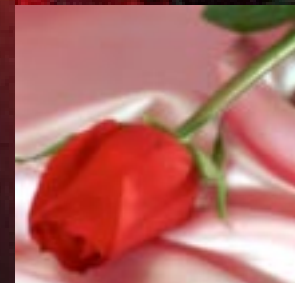
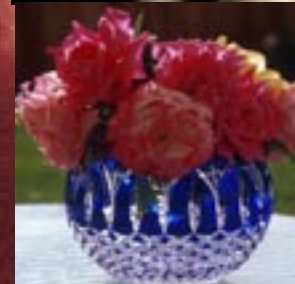
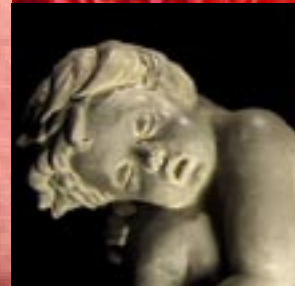
10 cups popped popcorn
3 tablespoons margarine or butter
1 10-ounce package regular marshmallows
Red food coloring
Red colored sugar

Place popped popcorn in a greased 13x9x2-inch baking pan and keep warm in a 300 ° oven while making marshmallow mixture (remove unpopped kernels). In a large saucepan melt margarine or butter over low heat. Add marshmallows and stir until completely melted. Remove from heat. (Or, in a microwave-safe bowl, micro-cook margarine and marshmallows on high for 1-1/2 to 2 minutes or until margarine or butter is melted and marshmallows are softened, carefully stirring once.) Stir until smooth. Stir in red food coloring. Stir in popped popcorn, half at a time. Cool until easy to handle (10 to 15 minutes). Press mixture into greased individual heart-shaped pans. Cool. Remove from pans. Sprinkle with red colored sugar. Wrap each heart in plastic wrap. Makes 9 hearts.

Marbled Nut Clusters

1 12-ounce package semisweet chocolate pieces
1-1/2 cups coarsely chopped mixed nuts, peanuts, or cashews
1 1-ounce white chocolate baking square

Place semisweet chocolate pieces in a heavy medium saucepan over low heat, stirring constantly just until melted. Stir in nuts. Spoon mixture by rounded teaspoons into 1-3/4-inch muffin cups lined with paper bake cups. Place white chocolate in a heavy small saucepan over low heat, stirring constantly just until melted. Drizzle a small amount of the white chocolate atop each cluster; swirl gently with a toothpick to create a marbled effect. Chill until firm (about 30 minutes in refrigerator or 10 minutes in freezer). Makes about 24 pieces.



Chocolate Truffle Dessert

6 ounces bittersweet or semisweet chocolate, chopped, or 6 ounces semisweet chocolate pieces
1 cup whipping cream
1/4 cup Irish cream liqueur, Kahlua, Amaretto, or milk
2 egg yolks, slightly beaten
2 tablespoons sugar
Melted white and/or dark chocolate (optional)
White chocolate shavings (optional)

Chill a small mixing bowl and the beaters of an electric mixer. Meanwhile, line an 8x8x2-inch pan with plastic wrap, extending the plastic wrap over the edges of the pan; set aside. In a heavy medium saucepan melt chopped chocolate or chocolate pieces over very low heat, stirring constantly until the chocolate begins to melt. Immediately remove from the heat; stir until smooth. Set aside. In the chilled mixing bowl combine whipping cream and 1 tablespoon of the liqueur or milk. Beat with the chilled beaters on low speed until soft peaks form (tips curl). Cover and refrigerate for up to 2 hours or until needed. In a heavy small saucepan stir together egg yolks, remaining liqueur or milk, and sugar. Cook and stir with a wire whisk over medium-low heat until mixture is very thick (about 8 minutes). Remove from heat; pour mixture into a medium mixing bowl. Add the melted chocolate, 2 tablespoons at a time, to the hot mixture, beating on medium speed until combined (the mixture will be thick). Add 1/2 cup of the whipped cream mixture; beat on low speed until smooth. Gently fold in remaining whipped cream mixture. Spoon the mixture into the prepared pan, spreading as necessary to make an even layer. Cover and freeze about 4 hours or until firm enough to cut. Invert the frozen mixture onto a waxed-paper-lined baking sheet. Carefully remove plastic wrap. Using 1-, 2-, and 3-inch cookie cutters, cut shapes from chocolate, dipping cutters into warm water between cuts to prevent sticking, if necessary. Cover and return shapes to freezer until serving time. To serve, drizzle plates with melted white and/or dark chocolate, if desired. Top with chocolate cutouts. If desired, garnish with shaved white chocolate. Store any leftovers, covered, in the freezer. Makes about 6 servings.

Chocolate Covered Strawberries

12 ounces semisweet chocolate, chopped
1 pint strawberries

Place all of the chocolate, except for one small piece, in a double boiler and melt over medium-high heat. It essential that the chocolate not be allowed to burn. Stir the chocolate constantly as it melts and then remove the chocolate from the heat when it reaches a temperature of 105 - 110 degrees F. Use a candy thermometer for accuracy. Add the remaining chocolate and stir until the mixture reaches a temperature of 87 — 92 degrees F. This process, 'tempering,' will create a smooth coating. Insert a skewer into each strawberry. Dip the strawberries into the melted chocolate and rotate to evenly coat. Maintain the temperature of the chocolate by repeating the 'tempering' process if needed. Fill a large bowl with sugar and cover the top tightly with plastic wrap. Insert the skewers upside down through the plastic and into the sugar. This will force the skewers to remain up-right. Transfer the bowl to the refrigerator and allow the strawberries to chill. Serve the strawberries on the skewers, or remove the skewers and serve the strawberries in a bowl.



Vanilla Bean Cheesecake with Walnut Crust

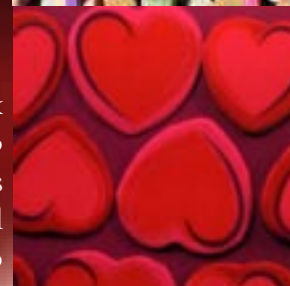
- 1 1/2 cups walnut pieces
- 1 3/4 cups sugar
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 2 cups sour cream
- 1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
- 2 pounds cream cheese, softened
- 1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise, seeds scraped
- 4 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1/4 teaspoon pure almond extract
- 1/2 cup heavy cream

Preheat the oven to 350°. Butter a 10-inch springform pan. In a food processor, pulse the walnuts with 1/4 cup of the sugar until finely ground. Add the butter; pulse until the mixture resembles moist sand. Press the crumbs into the bottom of the pan. Bake for 12 minutes, or until browned around the edges. In a small bowl, mix the sour cream with 1/4 cup of the sugar and 1 teaspoon of the vanilla. Reduce the oven temperature to 300°. In a standing electric mixer fitted with a paddle or using a handheld electric mixer, beat the cream cheese at low speed with the remaining 1 1/4 cups of sugar and the vanilla seeds just until combined. Beat in the eggs, 1 at a time, scraping down the bowl between additions. Add the remaining 2 teaspoons of vanilla and the almond extract. Slowly beat in the cream until smooth. Pour the cheesecake batter into the pan and bake for 65 to 70 minutes, until lightly golden and slightly jiggly in the center. Immediately pour the sour cream topping over the cheesecake and smooth the surface. Return the cheesecake to the oven and bake for 5 minutes longer. Transfer to a rack and let cool to room temperature. Run a sharp, thin-bladed knife around the cake and remove the ring. Refrigerate the cake for 3 hours, then cover loosely with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight before serving. Makes one 10-inch cheesecake.

Dark Chocolate Fudge

- About 2 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 1 1/2 cups half-and-half (light cream)
- 3 1/2 cups sugar
- 1/4 cup light corn syrup
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 8 ounces bittersweet or semisweet chocolate, chopped
- 4 ounces unsweetened chocolate, chopped
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 1 1/2 cups walnuts or pecans

Smoothly line an 8- or 9-inch square pan with foil. Lightly butter foil. In a 3- to 4-quart pan, mix half-and-half, sugar, corn syrup, and salt. Stir occasionally over high heat until simmering, about 3 minutes. With a brush dipped in water, frequently wipe off beads of syrup that form on the sides of the pan. Reduce heat to medium. Add bittersweet and unsweetened chocolate; gently stir until chocolate melts and mixture begins to simmer, 3 to 6 minutes. Insert a candy thermometer into mixture. Boil, occasionally stirring and washing sides of pan with wet brush, until mixture reaches 235° (or a drop of candy spooned into cold water forms a soft ball that flattens when removed from water), 30 to 40 minutes longer. Immediately pour fudge mixture into a 10- by 15-inch rimmed pan. Dot with 2 tablespoons butter and vanilla. Let stand undisturbed until a thermometer inserted in center of candy registers 115° (pan is warm to touch), 20 to 30 minutes. With a wide metal spatula, scrape mixture back and forth in pan until it becomes smooth and glossy and starts to thicken and mound but is still soft and malleable, 4 to 10 minutes. Add nuts and mix just enough to distribute. Scrape fudge into foil-lined pan. Let stand until firm to touch, at least 2 hours. Invert pan to release candy. Peel off foil. With a sharp knife, cut fudge into 1-inch squares and serve. Or wrap the uncured fudge airtight and store at room temperature up to 1 week.



Tenderloin of Beef St. Valentine

*NOTE: This dish looks and tastes great on a bed of creamed spinach with heart-shaped polenta gratin on the side.

9 ounces beef tenderloin, center-cut, trimmed of all silver skin and fat
1/2 teaspoon salt, as needed
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, as needed
2 bacon slices, cut into 1/4-inch dice
1/4 pound mushrooms, trimmed and quartered
2 teaspoons unsalted butter
1 shallot, peeled and minced
1 cup dry red wine
1 tablespoon white truffle oil, to taste
1 tablespoon chives, chopped fine
3 basil leaves, chopped fine
1 Creamed Spinach (recipe below)
1 Polenta Gratin (recipe below)

For Creamed Spinach:

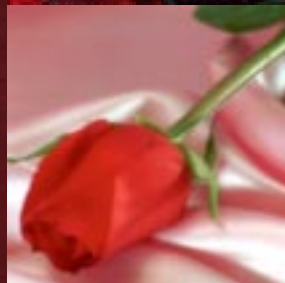
1 tablespoon butter
1 shallots, minced
1/2 pound spinach, washed and drained well
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 pinch white pepper, to taste
1/4 cup heavy cream

For Polenta Gratin:

1/2 teaspoon salt, to taste
2 cup water
1/2 cup yellow cornmeal
1 teaspoon vegetable oil, as needed
1/4 cup Parmesan cheese, grated

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Tie the meat and season it with salt and pepper. In a medium sized sauté pan cook the bacon until just barely crisp over medium heat, stirring frequently. Remove bacon with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels. Increase heat to medium-high and sear the beef on all sides in the remaining bacon fat. Remove the meat and pour off most of the rendered fat. Discard. Turn heat to medium low, add the mushrooms and cook until they begin to soften, about 2 minutes. Gather the mushrooms together in the center of the pan and place the beef on top. Transfer pan to the oven and bake for 20 to 30 minutes. The beef is cooked to about medium when it is firm to the touch, offering only slight resistance. Remove beef and mushrooms from the pan and reserve on a plate. Set the pan on medium heat and add the butter and shallots. Cook until softened, about 2 minutes. Add the wine and simmer until reduced to a couple of tablespoons. To the reduced wine return the mushrooms along with any juices on the plate that have been released by the beef. Stir in the truffle oil, chives, basil, and reserved bacon. Adjust seasoning with salt and pepper as desired. It may be necessary to add a tablespoon of water if the mushrooms soak up too much liquid. Untie and slice the meat and place slices on a bed of the creamed spinach. Arrange baked polenta on the plate and spoon the pan sauce around just before serving.

(continued on next page)



For Creamed Spinach:

Heat the butter in a large sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add the shallot and cook until softened, about 1 minute. Add the spinach, salt and pepper. Turn the spinach frequently with tongs until wilted, about 1 minute. Remove the spinach from the pan with the tongs. Set aside to drain on paper towels. Continue simmering the remaining liquid as you add the cream. Boil gently until cream thickens to a sauce consistency. Return spinach and thoroughly coat with the reduced cream. Adjust seasoning with additional salt and pepper if necessary before serving.

For Polenta Gratin:

Bring the salted water to a boil in a sauce pot over high heat. Whisk in the cornmeal in a very thin stream. Stirring constantly, allow mixture to return to a boil, then reduce heat to low. Cover and simmer the cornmeal for about 15 minutes; stir periodically. The cornmeal is properly cooked when it forms a heavy mass that pulls cleanly away from the sides of the pot. Lightly oil a 9-inch pie pan or casserole dish. Using a rubber spatula scoop the polenta into the pan, spread in an even layer about 3/4-inch thick and cover with plastic wrap. Refrigerate until firm, about 30 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 400 degrees F. When the polenta is firmly set, cut it into desired shapes with a cookie cutter. Press the oiled side of each shape into the grated cheese. Transfer shapes, cheese side down, to a lightly oiled nonstick skillet and bake for 15-20 minutes. When the cheese has turned golden brown, turn the polenta shapes out onto plates and serve browned side up.

Hearts of Beet Salad

*NOTE: The heart-shaped cutter may be found at most gourmet and specialty-foods markets.

- 1 lb. red beets
- 8 oz chevre (goat cheese), log-shaped
- 3 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp. distilled white vinegar
- 2 tbsp. chives, minced
- 1/2 tsp. granulated sugar
- 1/2 tsp. Pommery mustard
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. black pepper
- 2 cups mixed baby lettuce greens

Peel and cut the beets into 1/4-inch thick slices. (Three slices are needed for each serving.) Using a piece of thin twine, slice the chevre log into 1/4-inch rounds. (Two slices are needed for each serving.) Using a small heart-shaped cutter, cut the beets and the cheese slices into desired shapes. (Use a round cutter, if desired.) Place the beet slices in a microwavable plate and drizzle with a small amount of water. Cover the plate tightly with plastic wrap. Microwave on high until tender, about 5 minutes; chill. Combine the olive oil, vinegar, chives, sugar, mustard, salt, and pepper, and blend until smooth. Combine the dressing and the greens and toss well to coat. Place a beet slice on each plate. Top with a slice of cheese and another beet slice. Complete by adding another slice of cheese and finish with a beet slice. Divide the greens among the plates and arrange behind the heart-shaped beet. Drizzle with any remaining dressing.





Broiled Lamb Chops with Minted Cucumber Sauce

- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 4 lamb chops, about 2 to 3 ounces each salt to taste
- freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 medium cucumber, peeled and seeded
- 1/2 cup plain, non-fat yogurt
- 2 teaspoons fresh, finely chopped mint



Mix the lemon juice, chopped garlic, oregano and olive oil together. Brush the lamb chops with this mixture and marinate for about 30 minutes in the refrigerator. While the lamb is marinating, make the cucumber sauce. Puree the cucumber in a blender until chunky but not liquefied. Transfer the cucumber to a bowl and stir in the yogurt and mint. Preheat the broiler or grill. Season the lamb chops with salt and pepper. Place the chops on a broiler pan and broil 3 inches from the heat for 4 to 5 minutes. Turn and broil for an additional 3 minutes for medium rare, or 5 minutes for medium. Serve 2 lamb chops per person topped with minted cucumber sauce.



Red Grits

- *NOTE: There are no grits in this recipe.
- 2 cups frozen raspberries
- 5 tbsp. granulated sugar
- 2 1/2 cups water
- 2 1/2 tbsp. tapioca, minute tapioca variety
- 1 lemon
- 1/2 cup whipping cream



Combine the raspberries, sugar, and the water, reserving about 1/2 cup water for later use, in a saucepan and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Whisk together the tapioca, reserved water, and juice from the lemon. Whisk the tapioca mixture into the simmering raspberries. Simmer mixture about 1 to 2 minutes. The mixture should be of even consistency and the raspberries will have broken apart. Divide the mixture among wine glasses or dessert bowls; chill overnight. Whip the cream and spoon on top of the chilled desserts



Beef Fillet with Merlot Glaze

- 1/2 cup beef broth
- 1/4 cup Merlot or other dry red wine
- 1 tablespoon seedless raspberry jam
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 2 thin slices pancetta (2 oz. total)
- 2 beef fillet steaks (about 1 1/2 in. thick; 3/4 to 1 lb. total)
- Salt



In a 1- to 2-quart pan over high heat, stir broth, Merlot, jam, and pepper until boiling, then boil until reduced to 1/3 cup, about 7 minutes total. Meanwhile, unroll pancetta and wrap a slice around the rim of each steak. Broil steaks on a rack in a pan 4 to 6 inches from heat until browned, 6 to 7 minutes. Turn steaks over and broil until tops are browned, 6 to 7 minutes more for rare. Cook longer, if desired. Put steaks on warm plates and spoon sauce over them. Add salt to taste



Red Pepper-Tomato Soup

★ Create this delicious soup with heart-shaped croutons.

- 2 or 3 slices French bread, each about 1/2 inch thick
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3/4 teaspoon dried basil
- 1/4 cup (about 1 1/2 oz.) chopped shallots
- 1 can (14 1/2 oz.) reduced-sodium chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 cup canned peeled roasted red peppers, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (16 oz.) tomatoes
- Salt and pepper
- Sugar
- 2 tablespoons sour cream or whipping cream (optional)

With a heart-shaped cookie cutter or a knife, cut heart shapes (3 inches wide or smaller) out of bread. Lay cutouts on a baking sheet and brush tops with about 2 teaspoons oil. Sprinkle evenly with 1/4 teaspoon basil. Bake in a 350° oven until golden and crisp, about 15 minutes for a 3-inch-wide heart. Meanwhile, in a 2- to 3-quart pan, cook shallots, stirring often, in remaining 1 teaspoon oil over medium-high heat until shallots are translucent, about 3 minutes. Add broth, red peppers, tomatoes and their juice, and remaining 1/2 teaspoon basil. Bring to a boil over high heat; cover and simmer over low heat 5 to 10 minutes. With a slotted spoon, ladle peppers, tomatoes, and shallots into a blender or food processor; whirl until smooth. Return puree to pan; stir into liquid. Add salt, pepper, and sugar to taste. Ladle soup into bowls. Spoon dollops of sour cream decoratively over soup; swirl the tip of a knife through sour cream. Immediately before serving, set heart-shaped croutons on top.

Avocado and Lobster Salad

- Two 1 1/2-pound lobsters
- 3 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 1/2 teaspoon soy sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon finely grated fresh ginger
- Pinch of sugar
- 3 tablespoons canola oil
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 bunch watercress (6 ounces), large stems discarded
- 1 Hass avocado, peeled and cut into chunks

In a large pot of boiling water, cook the lobsters until they turn bright red, about 13 minutes. Drain and let cool. Twist off the tails and claws. Crack the claws and remove the meat; cut into large pieces. Using kitchen scissors, slit the tail shells lengthwise up the center and remove the tail meat. Remove the black intestinal tract and discard. Cut the tail meat into 1-inch medallions. Cover and refrigerate the lobster meat. In a large bowl, combine the vinegar with the soy sauce, ginger and sugar. Whisk in the oil until emulsified, then season with salt and pepper. Add the watercress and lobster and toss gently, then add the avocado and toss just until dressed. Serve chilled. 4 Servings



Lobster Salad

Four 1 1/2-pound lobsters
3/4 cup olive oil
3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
Salt and freshly ground pepper
6 ounces mesclun (about 8 cups)
1 tablespoon minced chives

Bring a stockpot of water to a boil. Add the lobsters head first, cover and cook over high heat for 9 minutes. Using tongs, transfer the lobsters to a large bowl; let cool. Twist off the claws. Using kitchen shears, snip the underside of the tails down the center and remove the lobster tail meat in one piece. Crack the claws with a mallet and remove the meat. Using a heavy knife, finely chop enough of the legs and shells to make 4 packed cups. In a medium saucepan, combine the olive oil with the chopped legs and shells and bring to a simmer over low heat. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 30 minutes. Strain the oil and let cool. Whisk the vinegar into the oil; season the vinaigrette with salt and pepper. Slice each lobster tail crosswise into 8 pieces. In a medium bowl, combine the tail and claw meat with the vinaigrette and toss to coat. Mound the mesclun on 8 plates and arrange the lobster alongside. Drizzle the mesclun with some of the remaining vinaigrette. Sprinkle with the chives and serve. 8 Servings.

French Scrambled Eggs with Truffle Oil

12 large eggs
1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons mineral water
6 tablespoons cold unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
Sea salt and freshly ground pepper
2 teaspoons white truffle oil
1 tablespoon finely chopped chives
6 warmed brioche rolls, or 12 slices from a loaf of brioche, toasted

In a bowl, whisk the eggs and water. Melt 2 tablespoons of the butter in a large stainless steel bowl set over a pot of simmering water. Add the eggs and cook over low heat, gently stirring with a heatproof rubber spatula and scraping the bottom of the bowl until the eggs just begin to set, about 5 minutes. Add the remaining butter to the eggs, 1 piece at a time, and cook, stirring and scraping the bottom and sides of the bowl, until the eggs are thick and cooked through but still soft, about 5 minutes longer. Season with salt and pepper; transfer to plates. Drizzle with the truffle oil, sprinkle with the chives and serve at once with the brioche. 6 Servings.

Chilled Asparagus with Crab Vinaigrette

3 pounds medium asparagus
1/4 cup canola oil
2 tablespoons Champagne vinegar
1/4 pound lump crabmeat (1 cup)
1/2 red bell pepper, finely diced
1/2 yellow bell pepper, finely diced
1/2 small red onion, finely chopped
1 tablespoon chopped tarragon
Salt and freshly ground pepper

In a large, deep skillet of boiling salted water, cook the asparagus over high heat until crisp-tender, about 5 minutes. Drain the asparagus and refresh in a bowl of ice water. Drain and pat dry. In a large bowl, mix the oil with the vinegar. Add the crabmeat, bell peppers, onion and tarragon and season with salt and pepper. Transfer the asparagus to a large, deep platter, spoon the crab vinaigrette over the top and serve. 8 Servings.

Penne with Asparagus and Artichokes

4 teaspoons pine nuts
1 1/2 pounds asparagus, cut into 1 1/2-inch lengths
2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
Salt and freshly ground pepper
24 baby artichokes (about 2 pounds), outer leaves discarded, bottoms trimmed, artichokes quartered and rubbed with a lemon half
1 1/2 cups low-sodium nonfat chicken broth
3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
1/2 pound penne
3/4 cup frozen baby peas, thawed
1/3 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
3 tablespoons coarsely chopped flat-leaf parsley

Preheat the oven to 350°. Spread the pine nuts in a pie plate and bake for about 6 minutes, or until lightly toasted. Transfer to a plate. Increase the oven temperature to 450°. In a bowl, toss the asparagus with 1 teaspoon of olive oil, 1 1/2 teaspoons of salt and 1/4 teaspoon of pepper. Spread the asparagus on a rimmed baking sheet and roast for 15 minutes, or until browned, shifting the pan every 5 minutes so the asparagus cooks evenly. Meanwhile, in a large nonstick skillet, heat the remaining 1 teaspoon of olive oil. Add the artichokes, cut side down, and cook over moderate heat until just golden brown, about 5 minutes. Add the chicken broth, lemon juice and garlic, cover and cook over low heat until the artichokes are just tender, about 8 minutes. In a large pot of boiling salted water, cook the penne until al dente. Drain the pasta well and return it to the pot. Add the asparagus, artichokes, peas, Parmesan and parsley and toss well. Transfer the pasta to warmed bowls; sprinkle with the toasted pine nuts and serve. 4 Servings.

Steamed Oysters and Oyster Broth

*NOTE: This recipe is actually served in two parts—first come the slightly steamed oysters, then the light, aromatic broth.

4 cups chicken stock or canned low-sodium broth
2 cups dry white wine
2 fish bouillon cubes, dissolved in 6 cups water
1 bunch of celery, tops trimmed, separated into ribs
2 bunches scallions, trimmed
1/2 cup finely julienned peeled fresh ginger
1 lemon, thinly sliced, ends reserved
3 dozen oysters, scrubbed clean
1 teaspoon each finely chopped parsley, cilantro, ginger and shallots

In a large, deep flameproof roasting pan, combine the chicken stock, wine and dissolved fish bouillon cubes. Arrange the celery in the pan with all the ribs facing the same direction. Arrange the scallions perpendicular to the celery. Scatter the ginger and reserved lemon ends over the vegetables. Cover the pan with foil, set it over 2 burners and bring the liquid to a boil. Arrange the oysters on the floating vegetable mat. Cover the pan with foil and simmer until the oysters just begin to open, 3 to 5 minutes. Using tongs, carefully transfer the oysters to a platter. With a knife tip or a small spoon, open the oysters and tip some of their juices into the broth. Serve the oysters warm or at room temperature. Continue to simmer the broth until it is reduced by half, 35 to 40 minutes. Strain the broth into a medium saucepan, then ladle it into small bowls or rimmed soup plates. Garnish with the lemon slices and a pinch each of the chopped parsley, cilantro, ginger and shallots; serve piping hot. 8 Servings.

