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LOVE IS IN THE AIR
A Brief History of Valentine's Day

While edible arrangements and singing bears are modern inventions, the history of Valentine’s Day actually stretches back centuries. Its earliest predecessor is the ancient Roman fertility festival, Lupercalia, which took place from the middle of February to the end of February.

As Christianity spread, Lupercalia was replaced by a day honoring Saint Valentine, a decision made by Pope Gelasius I to remove pagan associations from the holiday. In the Middle Ages, the holiday became associated with the celebration of romance between couples—an intimate holiday, rather than a societal one. In fact, the earliest written valentine dates from 1415.

Starting in the early 1800s, Valentine’s Day didn’t look much different from today’s festivities. Couples from all social classes throughout much of Europe used the day as an opportunity to exchange tokens of affection with their lovers.

Today, Valentine’s Day is one of America’s most popular holidays. Christmas is the only time we send more greeting cards, and about a quarter of all American adults purchase flowers for the holiday, making it the busiest time of year for florists.

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One thing that’s really interesting about this pregnancy is that I feel so much more prepared for the delivery. With Bella, I went into it knowing that I wanted to have a natural birth, but not having a great plan. I didn’t have a midwife or a doula, and the pregnancy has been all about trying to be preventative proactive. The original due date was April 14, and I joked that it would be our tax baby, but now the doctors say Mia’s measuring bigger, so she’ll be here two weeks early. We are expecting her July 14, just in case Mia shows up earlier than expected — as our tax baby, but now the doctors say Mia’s measuring bigger, so she’ll be here two weeks early. We are expecting her to arrive any time between the end of March and her original due date of tax season! I will be starting my maternity leave in the middle of March — just in case Mia shows up earlier than expected — and will return at the beginning of June.

I will miss being in the office while I’m away, but I’m looking forward to experiencing what being a mom of two feels like! I’ll see you this summer!

– Dr. Silva

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Wrigleyville Dental Holistic Dentistry

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How Exercise Stimulates Your Mind

When you exercise, you’re working more than just a specific muscle. Going for a run not only stretches your legs, but it pushes your cardiovascular output, you swing your arms, and you expand your lung capacity. Exercising has a full-body effect. But did you know that exercising works more than just that? Working out also stimulates the most important part of your body — your brain.

Your Happiness

According to John Ratey, M.D., an associate clinical professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, when you exercise, your body produces endorphins and happiness-inducing chemicals. This release is just as effective as antidepressants at boosting your mood. On top of that, research from the New England Journal of Medicine suggests that working out sparks the production of myokines — a protein that helps protect your brain from stress-induced depression.

Your Intelligenece

According to Dr. Ratey, when you work out, your body strengthens all parts of your brain tissue, including gray matter. Gray matter is determined by the density of brain cells in a particular area. This tissue is key to processing information, and the more of it you have, the easier it is for you to learn. It also makes your brain more resistant to stress and aging.

Your Memory

Exercising also boosts your memory. By working out, you increase the blood flow to your brain. According to Alfonso Alfani, Ph.D., research has linked less blood flow to the hippocampus — the area of the brain associated with memory and special recognition — to mild cognitive impairment and Alzheimer’s disease. When you exercise, you also produce more catehpin B, a protein linked to improving your memory.

Your brain is not like the other muscles in your body — in fact, your brain isn’t a muscle at all — and there isn’t a machine in the gym specifically designed for your brain. In order to maintain a proper, homeostatic environment in your body, from your head to your toes, utilize a consistent workout regimen and a proper diet. Help your brain maintain your happiness.

A FRUIT THAT HELPS YOUR MOUTH

Black Raspberries and Oral Cancer

The world of scientific study produces all sorts of amazing finds, and you never know what surprising facts will emerge from a laboratory setting. Recently, a group of Ohio State University researchers discovered an astonishing characteristic of black raspberries that could make a huge contribution to oral health. The study was presented at the American Institute for Cancer Research just this November.

The study, which was authored by Dr. Steve Oghumu, demonstrated that black raspberries inhibit the growth of oral cancer in rats. Some previous clinical trials suggested the fruit may prevent or slow oral cancer in humans, but they didn’t demonstrate the process. The Ohio State study attempts to find out exactly which genes the raspberries affect. “Our objective in this study,” Dr. Oghumu notes, “was to see whether those same genes were modulated in the rat model, so we could determine if we were seeing the same effects.”

Each group of rats in the study was given a different diet. One group ate a normal diet, while the other two groups had a diet consisting of 5 and 10 percent freeze-dried black raspberries. The group that was given the 5 percent diet experienced a 39 percent decrease in tumor size, while the 10 percent group saw a 29 percent drop off. Doctors are still not sure why the lower concentration proved more effective in slowing down cancer.

“The study is important,” Oghumu says, “because we confirmed that black raspberries can inhibit carcinogenesis in a rat model.” This study will be the basis of further tests on how the berries might work to inhibit oral cancer in humans. With this new study, we have gained a fresh perspective on oral cancer. Battling disease is incredibly complex science, and while this doesn’t mean oral cancer is cured, it will no doubt lead to some fascinating studies down the road.

Building a Better Brain

Turkey and Spinach Stuffed Mushrooms

INGREDIENTS

• 2 teaspoons coconut oil
• 6 large portobello mushroom caps, cleaned and gills removed
• 1 small onion, diced
• ½ pound ground turkey
• Handful of baby spinach leaves
• 6-8 grape tomatoes, sliced (roasted if preferred)
• Salt and pepper, to taste

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, melt coconut oil. Place the mushrooms into the skillet and let cook about 5-7 minutes until softened. Flip halfway through, then set aside.
2. In the same skillet, sauté onion until softened, about 3 minutes. Add ground turkey to the pan and break into small pieces. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and cook until done.
3. Remove turkey from heat and add baby spinach leaves. Let the turkey’s heat wilt the spinach.
4. To assemble, use a small spoon and scoop the turkey and spinach filling into the caps of the mushrooms. Top with roasted or regular grape tomatoes and serve warm!

Recipe courtesy of TableForTwoBlog.com.

A Gift for Every Taste

Your and your spouse don’t have to use February 14 as an excuse to cheat on your health and fitness goals. Instead of going for the tried and true — or should we say, tried and troublesome — treats, ditch the sugary sweets and that box of chocolates for something unique.

For the Aspiring Fitness Guru: Homemade Energy Bars

While the average store-brand energy bar can be packed with hidden sugars, any determined significant other with fitness goals will appreciate energy bars with a homemade touch. And they’re not as challenging as you think. Just search the web for recipes that use only a handful of ingredients. Try searching with the keyword “paleo” for healthy and simple options. Power pack your energy bars with natural ingredients, like seeds and nuts. As an added bonus (and if you’re feeling a little sappy), use a heart-shaped cookie cutter to show how much you respect and admire your significant other’s goals.

For Couples Who Like It Hot: Homemade Sriracha Chili Sauce

While we have no doubt there are those who would be thrilled to receive a fresh bottle of Sriracha for Valentine’s Day, take the store-bought sauce to the next level. Although homemade chili sauce recipes might take a little extra work and commitment, so does a great relationship! Search the web for a recipe in your wheelhouse. And don’t forget to wear gloves — capsaicin can irritate your skin! The opposite of sugary and sweet, mixing up your own jar of hot sauce will add more meaning to your sweetheart’s favorite condiment.

For the Classic Romantic: DIY Chocolate-Dipped Fruit Box

If your sweetheart is expecting a heart-shaped box of chocolates for Valentine’s Day, take the store-bought sauce to the next level. Although homemade chili sauce recipes might take a little extra work and commitment, so does a great relationship! Search the web for a recipe in your wheelhouse. And don’t forget to wear gloves — capsaicin can irritate your skin! The opposite of sugary and sweet, mixing up your own jar of hot sauce will add more meaning to your sweetheart’s favorite condiment.

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