

Happy Valentine's Day



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How did Valentine symbols originate

It's not difficult to figure out the connection between the heart and Valentine's Day. The heart, after all, was thought in ancient times to be the source of all emotions. It later came to be associated only with the emotion of love. (Today, we know that the heart is, basically, the pump that keeps blood flowing through our bodies!) It's not clear when the valentine heart shape became the symbol for the heart (we all know the heart isn't really shaped like that). Some scholars speculate that the heart symbol as we use it to signify romance or love came from early attempts by people to draw an organ they'd never seen. Anyway, here are some of the other valentine symbols and their origins:

Red roses were said to be the favorite flower of Venus, the Roman goddess of love; also, red is a color that signifies strong feelings.

Lace has long been used to make women's handkerchiefs. Hundreds of years ago, if a woman dropped her handkerchief, a man



might pick it up for her. Sometimes, if she had her eye on the right man, a woman might intentionally drop her handkerchief to encourage him. So, people began to think of romance when they thought of lace.

Love knots have series of winding and interlacing loops with no beginning and no end. A symbol of everlasting love, love knots were made from ribbon or drawn on paper.

Lovebirds, colorful birds found in Africa, are so named because they sit closely together in pairs — like sweethearts do! Doves are symbols of loyalty and

love, because they mate for life and share the care of their babies.

How about the "X" sign representing a kiss? This tradition started with the Medieval practice of allowing those who could not write to sign documents with an "X". This was done before witnesses, and the signer placed a kiss upon the "X" to show sincerity. This is how the kiss came to be synonymous with the letter "X", and how the "X" came to be commonly used at the end of letters as kiss symbols. (Some believed "X" was chosen as a variation on the cross symbol, while others believe it might have been a pledge in the name of Christ, since the "X" or Chi symbol, is the second letter of the Greek alphabet and has been used in church history to represent Christ.)

It became easier to mail valentines in the mid 1800s, when the modern postal service implemented the penny post. Until then, postage was so pricey that most cards were delivered by hand.

For Valentine's Day, No 'Ifs' or 'Ands' - Just Fudge

There has always been something seductive about chocolate. Let's face it, Valentine's Day may have started as a celebration of love, but for many it is but an excuse to indulge in the rich, dark, decadent stuff of romance, from tortes to truffles and everything in between. This year, pamper your sweetie (or yourself!) with this classic "Chocolate Fudge Cake." As easy to prepare as it is to enjoy, this cake is a sure-fire way to start a whole new romance - with chocolate.

Chocolate Fudge Cake

Makes 2 cakes

1/2 cup unsalted butter
1/3 cup vegetable oil
1-1/4 cups sugar
1 cup chopped good-quality semisweet chocolate
1/3 cup milk
2 cups all-purpose flour
1/3 cup cocoa powder
1 tablespoon baking powder
pinch of baking soda
2 eggs

Fudge topping

1/2 cup heavy cream
1 tablespoon light corn syrup
1-1/4 cups chopped good-quality semisweet chocolate
1. Preheat the oven to 325 F. Line two 6-cup loaf pans, each 8-1/2 by 4-1/2 by 2 inches.
2. Combine the butter, oil, sugar, chocolate, milk and 2/3 cup water in a large saucepan and

stir over low heat until the sugar dissolves and the chocolate melts. Remove from the heat. Sift together the flour, cocoa, baking powder and baking soda into a bowl. Beat in the chocolate mixture (using a wire whisk means the mixture is less likely to form lumps).

3. Gradually beat the eggs, one at a time, into the chocolate mixture. Pour into the loaf pans and smooth the top with the back of a spoon. Place the pans on a baking sheet and bake for 50 minutes or until a skewer comes out clean when inserted into the centre of each cake. Cool in the pans for five minutes. Turn out onto a wire rack; peel off the paper and cool completely, crust side up.

4. To make the fudge topping, bring the cream and corn syrup just to a boil in a small saucepan, then remove from the heat. Put the chopped chocolate in a heatproof bowl and gradually add the cream a little at a time, stirring after each addition, until all the cream has been added and the mixture is smooth. Place the bowl into a larger bowl of ice or refrigerate until the mixture has cooled and thickened. Spoon onto the cakes and spread over the top with a flexible metal spatula. It may run a little over the sides.

FIND YOUR

SWEET OF A

Just for your valer

Heartfelt

For Your

Perhaps you're looking for a Valentine directly from the heart — they imagine. Here are some inspi-

FOR HIM

Appeal to his manly appetite and whip up a culinary masterpiece featuring all of his favourite foods. Or, if you'd rather stay out of the kitchen, make reservations at a cosy, informal restaurant where he can just relax and be himself.

Indulge him in a night of his favourite activity. If that may be watching sports, fishing or even that action flick he's seen a dozen times, snuggle up with your man and cheer along.

Give him one day off from his share of the chores so he can just lounge around in sweatpants and his lucky college T-shirt.

Send him flowers at work for an interesting change.

Ask your parents to watch the kids so you can spend some quality time together.

Invite his buddies over for sports night or game night.

FOR HER

Rent her favourite weepy love story from the local video store and watch it with her. Cuddle her at the most sappy moments and make sure tissues are not too far away.

Turn the bedroom into a lovers' retreat, complete with scented candles, rose petals on the sheets, soft music and the like. Wear silk pyjamas rather than your favourite gym shorts to bed.



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