

Dinner for Your Honey



Let's just assume for the moment that you're not the greatest cook. In fact, let's assume you don't make any of the meals in your house, but just this once, you want to surprise your honey by making dinner for Valentine's Day.

Here are my 7 top tips to make that dinner a success.

1. Buy fresh food. Nothing from a box. You're going to make a real meal with food you didn't order in and didn't pick up in the freezer section.

2. Pick something easy. I'm going to help you with that. If your honey is on the foodie side I'd go French. The Chicken with a French Pan Sauce is easy to make and will make you feel like you're in the French countryside. If your honey leans toward basic comfort food, I'd make meatloaf. This one will surprise you. It tastes just like a Burger King Whopper, only this is healthy.

3. Make it colorful. This is where I tell you to eat your veggies. Pick one or two that you think will go well with your dish. I'm giving you a straightforward pepper recipe because bell peppers can be found in yellow, red, orange, green and purple.

4. Use a sharp knife. There's nothing more dangerous in the kitchen than a dull knife. My father taught me that, and when I worked in restaurants our knives were sharpened weekly. A sharp knife makes meal prep faster, easier and even prettier because you're slicing cleanly through your food and not hacking away at it. One nasty slip and dinner is ruined by a trip to the emergency room.

5. Match a beverage. You might be a club soda or filtered water person. You can fancy it up with a slice of cucumber, a slice of ginger, lemon, lime or even an orange slice. Make it pretty. All it takes is one slice. If you indulge in wine, a chardonnay or white burgundy will go well with the chicken and a pinot noir or malbec will do well for your meatloaf. Beer drinker? My friends tell me a Stella Artois makes a great beer to go with chicken and choose a British bitter, a brown ale or even a porter for your meatloaf.

6. Wash up. Even if your honey doesn't volunteer to clean up with you, do it by yourself. The recipes I'm giving you don't require a lot of pots and pans, so even if you don't have a dishwasher, this will go fast. Any honey will appreciate the effort and reward you kindly.

7. Have a simple dessert. I'm going to make this one super easy for you. Choose fruit and chocolate. I'd pick a package of raspberries or blackberries. Then choose a chocolate bar that is 72% cacao or higher. You can't miss the numbers. They are shown really large on the packages now. Choose a good brand. Scharfenberger, Ghirardelli, Green and Black and more. You can Google "top 10 chocolate bars" and you'll find all kinds of exotic brands. To keep it healthy, choose one with the high cacao point (even 85% is perfect) and suck on bits of it together as you finish up your beverage. The lower the number the more sugar. That's not good. Don't go to 100% though; that

one will taste like pavement.

Plan on about an hour of prep time (not including your time in the grocery store). For an experienced cook it won't take that long but I'd recommend you leave yourself enough time to pore over the recipes.

Remember, if your veggies are done before the meatloaf (for example), you can just turn them off and let them sit. You can reheat them when the entrée is done.

I want you to enjoy the gesture you're expressing by making dinner. And have a Happy Valentine's Day!

Make your honey a romantic Valentine's day dinner with this luxurious yet healthy-Tarragon Mustard Shrimp.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Zola". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.



Tarragon Mustard Shrimp

This is a delicious recipe that anyone can make well. Try it as an appetizer or an entrée; it can be served, hot, room temp or cold.