



February 14th

Valentine's Day Menu

Breakfast:

Heart Shaped Pancakes with fresh Strawberries and Maple Syrup

Strawberry Yogurt Parfaits

Orange Juice

Dinner:

Spinach Lasagna Béchamel

Tossed Salad with Strawberries, Green Onion, Feta and Raspberry Vinaigrette

Garlic Toast

Strawberry Lemonade

Heart Shaped Butter Cookies

Decadent Chocolate Cake with Strawberries and Cream

Buttermilk Pancakes

1 cup flour
1 tbsp. sugar
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. baking soda
1 egg
1 c. buttermilk, more if needed to thin out batter
2 tbsp. butter, melted
1/2 tsp. vanilla

Preheat a lightly oiled griddle or frying pan. Sift and measure flour; sift again with sugar, salt and baking soda. Beat egg in medium bowl. Blend in buttermilk. Add dry ingredients, beating until smooth; blend in melted butter. Add up to 1/4 cup more buttermilk for thinner cakes. Adjust consistency as required to maintain a pourable pancake batter by adding additional flour or buttermilk. Cook on lightly oiled griddle or fry pan. Use a 1/3 cup measuring cup to pour out pancakes onto griddle. Turn pancakes when surface bubbles begin to break.

You can keep these warm in a low oven until ready to serve. Before serving use a large heart shaped cookie cutter to cut out the shapes. Serve with pure maple syrup or your personal favorite.

Strawberry Topping

1 lb. fresh strawberries
Sugar

Slice strawberries into small pieces. This is a good activity for older children. Sprinkle strawberries with sugar to coat and stir. Allow to sit while pancakes are cooking to produce a nice syrup.

Strawberry Yogurt Parfaits

1 cup low-fat or non-fat vanilla yogurt
1/2 cup granola
1 cup sliced strawberries
2 Tbsp. maple syrup

Place 1/4 cup of the yogurt in the bottom of two glasses or parfait dishes. Top with one tablespoon of granola. Top with 1/4 cup of the sliced strawberries. Repeat the layers. Drizzle 1/2 tablespoon of the maple syrup over each yogurt parfait. Makes 2 yogurt parfaits.

Spinach Lasagna Béchamel

6 cups milk
1 cup butter
1 cup unbleached flour
salt and pepper
1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
1/4 cup vegetable oil or butter
2 garlic cloves (minced or pressed)
2 cups of chopped onions
2 lbs spinach, rinsed, stemmed, and chopped
3/4 cup fresh parsley, chopped
1 lb ricotta cheese
2 eggs
2 cups parmesan cheese, freshly grated (5 oz)
2 cups mozzarella cheese, grated (8 oz)
1 (16 ounce) package lasagna noodles

Cook noodles according to package directions. Meanwhile, in a medium size pan, melt butter over medium heat. Do not let the butter brown. Whisk in flour and cook for 3 or 4 minutes, stirring constantly. Gradually add hot milk. Continue to whisk until the sauce is thickened. Add the freshly grated nutmeg if using. Sauté the garlic and onions in the butter or oil until the onions are translucent. Stir in the spinach and 1/2 cup of the parsley. Add a little water if the spinach is dry. Cook until the spinach wilts then remove it from the heat; set aside.

Mix the remaining parsley, ricotta, eggs and 2/3 of the parmesan cheese together. Oil a large casserole or lasagna pan.

Layer the ingredients as follows: 1 1/2 to 2 cups of sauce, 1/3 of the noodles, 1/2 of the spinach, all the mozzarella, 1 1/2 to 2 cups sauce, 1/3 of the noodles, all the ricotta mixture left, all of the spinach left, 1 1/2 to 2 cups of the sauce, the remaining noodles, the rest of the sauce, sprinkling the remaining parmesan cheese on top.

Cover the casserole and bake at 350°F for 45 minutes. Uncover the casserole and bake for another 10 to 15 minutes (you can add buttered bread crumbs to the top at this point. Remove the casserole from the oven and let it rest for 10 to 15 minutes before serving.

Tossed Salad with Strawberries, Green Onion, Feta and Raspberry Vinaigrette

6 cups torn mixed salad greens
1 pint fresh strawberries, sliced
1 package (4 ounces) crumbled feta cheese
1 stalk green onion, washed and finely chopped
Raspberry Vinaigrette

In a large salad bowl, combine the salad greens, strawberries, feta cheese and green onion. Drizzle with vinaigrette and toss to coat. Yield: 4-6 servings.

Garlic Toast

1 unsliced loaf (1-1/2 pounds) French bread
1/2 cup butter or margarine, melted
1/4 cup grated Romano or Parmesan cheese
2 garlic cloves, minced or 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
Paprika

Slice bread into thick slices. Place on a large baking sheet. In a small bowl, combine butter, cheese, garlic and oregano; brush onto cut surfaces of bread. Sprinkle with paprika. Broil about 4 in. from heat for 2-3 minutes or until lightly toasted. Watch carefully!

Strawberry Lemonade

6 lemons
1 cup white sugar
6 cups cold water
1 pint strawberries, pureed

Juice the lemons to make 1 cup of juice. To make your labor easier, **FIRMLY** roll the lemons between your hand and counter top before cutting in half and juicing. In a gallon pitcher combine lemon juice, sugar, cold water and strawberries. Stir. Adjust water to taste. Chill and serve over ice.

Butter Cookies

2 c. butter (softened)
1 c. sugar
2 eggs
4 tsp. vanilla
2 tsp. lemon extract
6 c. flour
1 tsp. baking powder

Cream together butter, sugar, eggs, vanilla and lemon ext. Mix in flour and baking powder. Chill dough for several hours (I don't). Roll thin and cut into various sizes of heart shapes. Bake at 425 for 5-6 minutes, (until barely done). Do not over bake!! Cool and frost.

Butter Frosting

1/3 c. butter or margarine
4 1/2 c. sifted powdered sugar
1/4 c. milk
1 1/2 tsp. vanilla

Cream together with a mixer or beaters. Add a few drops of red food coloring to get a pretty shade of pink (or red). Spread on cookies and sprinkle with sprinkles if you like. Fun for kids!

Decadent Chocolate Cake

Cake:

- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips (6 oz)
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine
- 1/2 cup Gold Medal® all-purpose flour
- 4 eggs, separated
- 1/2 cup sugar

Sauce:

- 1 box (10 oz) frozen strawberries, thawed, drained and juice reserved
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch

Frosting:

- 1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips
- 2 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 2 tablespoons light corn syrup

Garnish:

- 1/2 cup whipped cream
- Fresh strawberries, if desired

1. Heat oven to 325°F. Grease bottom and side of 8-inch spring-form pan or 9-inch round cake pan with shortening. In 2-quart heavy saucepan, melt 1 cup chocolate chips and 1/2 cup butter over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Cool 5 minutes. Stir in flour until smooth. Stir in egg yolks until well blended; set aside.

2. In large bowl, beat egg whites with electric mixer on high speed until foamy. Beat in 1/2 cup sugar, 1 tablespoon at a time, until soft peaks form. Using rubber spatula, fold chocolate mixture into egg whites. (*Fold means to carefully use your spoon or spatula to lift the mixture from the bottom . up, folding over to incorporate. If you stir or fold to hard, you will deflate the air and will end up with a heavy cake.*) Spread in pan.

3. Bake spring-form pan 35 to 40 minutes, round cake pan 30 to 35 minutes, or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean (top will appear dry and cracked). (I like to wrap tin foil on the outside bottom of my spring-form pan, just incase there is a leak!) Cool 10 minutes. Run knife along side of cake to loosen; remove side of spring-form pan. Place cooling rack upside down over cake; turn rack and cake over. Remove bottom of spring-form pan or round cake pan. Cool completely, about 1 hour.

4. Meanwhile, add enough water to reserved strawberry juice to measure 1 cup. In 1-quart saucepan, mix 1/4 cup sugar and the cornstarch. Stir in juice and thawed strawberries. Heat to boiling over medium heat. Boil and stir 1 minute. Place small strainer over small bowl. Pour mixture through strainer to remove seeds; discard seeds; set aside.

5. Place cake on serving plate. In 1-quart saucepan, heat frosting ingredients over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until chips are melted. Spread over top of cake, allowing some to drizzle down side. Place whipped cream in decorating bag fitted with star tip. Pipe a rosette on each serving. (Or simply spoon some cream on each cake.)

Serve cake with sauce. Garnish with fresh strawberries.

Whipped Cream

1 cup heavy cream

1/4 cup sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla

Whip cream until almost stiff. Add sugar and vanilla; beat until cream holds peaks.