

Menu Planning for February 2015

Valentine's Day is the second busiest restaurant day of the year and it's on a Saturday this year. The middle of the month provides an opportunity for lots of guest visits - Valentine's Day on Saturday Feb. 14th (also International Condom Day!) leading into the President's Day weekend with Monday, February 16th as a national holiday. A full week of mixed culinary opportunity this month with Mardi Gras on February 17th and Chinese New Year starting on February 19th!

Plan for February:

Full Moon February 3rd: called the Snow Moon or the Hunger Moon

- February 1st – Super Bowl Sunday
- February 2nd – Groundhog Day
- February 14th – St. Valentine's Day (a Saturday)
- February 16th – President's Day (Monday)
- February 17th – Mardi Gras
- February 18th – Ash Wednesday
- February 19th – Chinese New Year commences, year of the Goat
- National Grapefruit Month
- Black History Month

Plan ahead for March:

Full Moon on March 5th is considered the last full moon of winter. Called the Worm Moon, Full Crust Moon, Full Sap Moon and Lenten Moon.

- March 3rd – Peach Blossom Day
- March 4 -5th - Purim
- March 8th – Daylight Savings time – Spring forward an hour for more evening sun!
- March 11th – Johnny Appleseed Day
- March 15th – Ides of March
- March 17th – St. Patrick's Day
- March 20th – First Day of Spring
- National Nutrition Month

February is a short month launched with the Super Bowl and hosting a three day weekend in the middle that celebrates Valentine's Day and President's Day. In the depths of winter for most parts of the nation, it's fun to think about celebrating the inevitable return of Spring. Two of the month's holidays are great for this theme: Groundhog day (if he doesn't see his shadow it's an early spring); and President's Day weekend are usually linked with spring themes. And then there's Valentine's Day when lovers chose to renew their passion - but that's addressed on page two.

Starting the month's celebrations are the Super Bowl on February 1st and Groundhog Day on February 2nd. Super Bowl gatherings are renowned for simple but delicious foods: guacamole, chips, chile and other comfort foods. Prepare your menu ahead of time so you can root for your favorite team without having to worry about your guests! How can you change up the menu to be creative and not get stuck with avocados....? If you're making guacamole for the big game, be sure to buy your avocados ahead of time so they can ripen in time for the Superbowl gathering. Think about adding fingerlimes to this year's guacamole...

St. Valentine's Day (Saturday February 14th) has it's own array of special foods and aphrodisiacs, you choose your favorite:

Asparagus: three courses of asparagus were served to 19th century bridegrooms because of the reputed aphrodisiac powers of the vegetable.

Banana: Lauded not only for the fruit's shape, but also for its creamy, lush texture; some studies show its enzyme bromelain enhances male performance.

Caviar: is high in zinc, which stimulates the formation of testosterone, maintaining male functionality.

Champagne: viewed as the "drink of love," moderate quantities lower inhibitions and cause a warm glow in the body.

Chocolate: contains a sedative which relaxes and lowers inhibitions and a stimulant to increase activity and the desire for physical contact. It was actually banned from some monasteries centuries ago.

Figs: seasonal crops were celebrated by ancient Greeks in a frenzied copulation ritual.

Ginseng: increases desire for physical contact.

Oysters: Some oysters repeatedly change their sex from male to female and back, giving rise to claims that the oyster lets one experience both the masculine and feminine sides of love.

Radish: considered a divine aphrodisiac by Egyptian pharaohs, most likely because its spicy taste stimulated the palate.

Truffles: probably due to their rarity and musky aroma, long considered to arouse the palate and the body. To sustain his masculinity, an ancient lover in lore was said to have gorged himself to death on Alba truffles during his wedding feast.

With Mardi Gras, Rex, the King of Carnival, selected the Mardi Gras colors in 1892 and assigned meaning to them: Purple for justice, green for faith, and gold for power. Mardi Gras foods are a wonderful part of the culture and no Mardi Gras celebration is complete without a King Cake, also known as Twelfth Night Cake. This cake is actually sweetened yeast bread baked in a ring shape. The cake is frosted with gold, green, and purple icing. Although this cake is colorful and tasty, the real fun hides within the cake as the baker of each King Cake has hidden a special token inside. The token is a dried red bean or a figurine of a baby, representing the Christ child. When the cake is cut and shared, the finder of the hidden treasure is said to enjoy good luck for the coming year. The lucky recipient may also be expected to bake the King Cake or throw the Mardi Gras party for the following year!

At the Chinese New Year (starts February 19th), serving a whole chicken symbolizes family togetherness. Noodles represent a long life; (an old superstition says that it's bad luck to cut them); clams and Spring Rolls symbolize wealth. Tangerines and oranges are freely shared during Chinese New Year as the words for tangerine and orange sound like luck and wealth, respectively. And Pomelos signify abundance because the Chinese word for pomelo sounds like the word meaning "to have". On Chinese New Year's Eve it is customary to serve a fish at the end of the evening meal, symbolizing a wish for abundance in the coming year. For added symbolism, the fish is served whole, with head and tail attached, symbolizing a good beginning and ending for the coming year.

*** Coosemans Shipping can also provide fresh edible flowers, orchids, microgreens and garnishes for Valentine's Day. Coosemans Shipping will source fresh truffles with a sufficient pre-order required. Traditional citrus for Chinese New Year is in season and available.

Remember that the items in **BOLD** will prove to usually be better values as they are in their peak harvest or storage period.

Apples
Artichokes
Asparagus
Avocados – Calif. new
Avocados - Chile
Bananas
Beans – Chinese Long
Beans - Dragon
Beans - Fava
Beans - French
Beans - Green
Beans – Purple Wax
Beans – Yellow Wax
Beets
Bok Choy, Baby
Broccoli
Broccoli Rabe
Broccolini
Brussels Sprouts
Cabbage, green
Cabbage, red
Cactus Leaves
Cantaloupe - Offshore
Cape Gooseberry
Cardoon
Carrots, Baby w/ Tops
Cauliflower
Celery
Celery Root
Chayote Squash
Chirimoya
Chicories
Citrus – Blood Oranges
Citrus – Cara Cara

Citrus - Grapefruit
Citrus – Kumquats
Citrus – Meyer Lemon
Citrus - Navel orange
Citrus – Oroblanco
Citrus - Pomelo
Corn
Dragonfruit, white
Endive, Belgian, red
English Peas
Fennel
Garlic Greens
Ginger
Grapes - Chile
Greens, winter
Hearts of Palm
Honeydew - Offshore
Horseradish
Jicama
Kale
Kiwifruit
Kohl Rabi (Green & Purple)
Leeks
Lettuce – Leaf
Lettuce - Spring Mix
Lettuce –Iceberg
Lettuce-Baby (all)
Mangoes - Brazil
Melon, Kiwano
Mushrooms - Chanterelle
Mushrooms - Hedgehog
Mushrooms – Porcini
Mushrooms – Truffles
Mushrooms - Woodear
Napa Cabbage
Nectarines - Chile
Onions – Spring Sweet
Papaya
Parsnips

Passionfruit
Peaches - Chile
Pearl Onions
Pears - Winter
Peas
Peppers - Chile
Peppers, Bell – Green
Peppers, Bell – Red and Gold
Pineapple
Plums - Chile
Potatoes – Fingerling
Potatoes – Purple
Potatoes – Red
Potatoes - Russet
Potatoes – Yukon Gold
Potatoes-White
Radicchio
Radishes
Rhubarb
Root Vegetables, Baby
Rutabagas
Shallots
Sno Peas
Spinach
Spinach - Baby
Squash – Hard Winter
Squash – Yellow Crookneck
Squash – Zucchini
Squash, summer, baby
Star Fruit
Strawberries
Sugar Snap Peas
Sunchokes
Sweet Potatoes
Tangelos
Tangerines
Tomatoes
Turnips