

Menu Planning for February 2018

Valentine's Day is the second busiest restaurant day of the year and it's on a Wednesday this year. The middle of the month provides an opportunity for lots of guest visits - Valentine's Day on Wednesday Feb. 14th leading into the President's Day weekend with Monday, February 19th as a national holiday allows for two weekends of full seatings and lots of produce sales.

Plan for February:

- February 2nd – Groundhog Day
- February 4th – Super Bowl Sunday
- February 14th – St. Valentine's Day
- February 19th – President's Day (Monday)
- February 13th – Mardi Gras
- February 28th – Purim
- National Grapefruit Month
- Black History Month

Plan ahead for March:

Full Moon on March 1st is called the Worm Moon, Full Crust Moon, Full Sap Moon and Lenten Moon. A second full moon is on March 31st.

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

February is a short month launched with Groundhog Day and then the Super Bowl (February 4th) followed on the 14th by Valentine's Day and President's Day weekend. In the depths of winter for most parts of the nation, it's fun to think about celebrating the inevitable return of Spring, so 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. Valentine's Day is when lovers may chose to ignite or renew their passion - but that's addressed on page two.

Starting the month's celebrations are Groundhog Day on February 2nd and the Super Bowl on February 4th. 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 hard avocados....? If you're making guacamole for the big game, be sure to buy your avocados ahead of time so they can be tempered in time for the Super Bowl gathering. Think about adding fingerlimes to this year's guacamole... or put them into Coronas!

For Mardi Gras (February 13th), Rex, the King of Carnival, selected the Mardi Gras colors in 1892 and assigned meaning to the three of 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!

St. Valentine's Day (Wednesday, February 14th) has its 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 allege that 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 are said to 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.

At the Chinese New Year (starts February 16th Year of the Dog), 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 the Chinese words for 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, truffles, microgreens and garnishes for Valentine's Day. Coosemans Shipping can source fresh truffles – a pre-order is required. Traditional citrus varieties 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

Cherimoya

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