Mom's Moment: Valentine's Day Dining & Recipes

Written by Nadine Bubeck

I've decided I'm not doing my obligatory cliché Valentine's Day post on fab dates ideas, how to keep the spark alive, or great gifts to get your wife or husband. Instead, I'm writing about food.

As a mom, my meals mostly consist of whatever my son doesn't eat: leftover mac & cheese, goldfish, or uneaten hummus (don't judge— that's basically his foods of choice). Therefore, this Valentine's Day, my husband and I have decided to indulge.

So the saying goes, food is the key to a man's heart, but since I'm no chef, I've turned to a trusted friend to woo my hubby this Valentine's Day. Have you been to Talvera at Four Seasons Troon? If not, go. It's amazing.

Executive Chef Mel Mecinas rocks. He's been at The Four Seasons for ten years and spearheads the ultimate menu featuring savory dishes. Because he's so sweet, Chef Mel took the time to chat with me about cooking— specifically, how to create an A-list V-Day meal at home.

In his opinion, the most romantic dinner consists of a caviar and ahi tuna appetizer, an entrée of lobster, and plenty of chocolate for dessert. But since the majority of us don't have a bank account for caviar, lobster, and a chocolate fountain, Chef Mel has interesting insight for the at-home wannabe chef.

First, create a unique salad. Besides lettuce, tomato, etc… Chef Mel suggests adding charred corn, roasted cauliflower, feta cheese, and quinoa. At Talavera, they top a handful of salads with freeze-dried tangerines, candied kumquats and fried feta.

I then asked Chef Mel how to cook a fabulous steak considering I'm clueless when it comes to prepping meat. He says the first thing is to purchase a good cut of meat, preferably a rib eye or New York. His rule of thumb: keep things simple— just season with salt and pepper. To prep, heat a cast iron pan over high heat and sear the steak on both sides - don't touch it once it's it in the pan.

And as a gift from Mel to you, he's included some wonderful side dish recipes for your eating pleasure: sautéed mushrooms and Chorizo mac & cheese.

Sauteed Mushrooms (serves 4)

- *2 lbs of organic mushrooms or your choice of mixed mushrooms*
- *1 tablespoon chopped shallots*
- *1 tablespoon chopped garlic*
- *1 teaspoons chopped parsley*
- *¼ cup of Marsala wine*
- *1/4 cup olive oil*
- *Freshly ground white pepper*
- *Kosher Salt to Taste*

Slice or dice all your mushrooms. If you are using shiitakes just remove the stem.

In a sauté pan over medium heat, preheat the oil and add the mushrooms, cook and mix them for a few minutes then add the shallot and garlic - turn the heat high to allow you to get some caramelization on the mushrooms. Once the mushrooms have some color on it, deglazed the pan with the marsala wine, let it reduce by just under half, season with salt & pepper then add the chopped parsley. Enjoy!

Ranchero Mac & Cheese with Spanish Chorizo (serves 4)

- *2 poblano chiles, roasted, seeded and ¼ inch Dice*
- *2 cups heavy cream*
- *1 cup Small diced Dry Aged Spanish Chorizo*
- *½ cup Caramelized onions*
- *8 ounces Tubetti pasta or elbow macaroni*
- *1/3 pound Pepper Jack Cheese Grated*

- *1/2 pound Monterey Jack cheese, grated*
- *1 cup cilantro leaves, coarsely chopped*
- *Salt and freshly ground White pepper*

In a large sauce pot, bring the cream to a boil and add the two cheeses and simmer it in a low heat for about couple minutes or until the cheese is completely melted.

Combine the Chorizo, roasted pepper, caramelized onions with the cheese mix and cook together for a few minutes.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Cook the pasta until al dente. Drain well. Add the pasta to the mixture, along with chopped cilantro. Stir well and season with salt and pepper to taste.

To wrap things up on an "awe" note, Chef Mel says if you're cooking for that special someone, cook from the heart - not from a complicated cookbook or recipe.And if all else fails, dine at Talvera.

Happy Valentine's Day!

About Nadine

Nadine Bubeck is a multi-media personality, author, blogger, PR pro, speaker, and blessed boy mom. The TV News anchor turned all things mama contributes to numerous publications and is often utilized on TV as a parenting expert. Her niche: everything mom, baby, toddler, child, and family. She is the founder and owner of All Things Mama Media, LLC, the parent company for All Things Mama TV, BoyMamas.com, and more.

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