



Foods that make you go mmm ...

BY STEPH RODRIGUEZ / stephr@newsreview.com

Certain foods are meant to be

shared, and often they can symbolize love and romance. Giving someone something special to experience with all five senses is also very intimate—a customized box of gourmet chocolates or a fresh basket of fruit paired with a celebratory bottle of bubbly champagne. With these small luxuries in mind, SN&R created a list of indulgent treats to enjoy with your partner, your close friends or the one you've admired from afar.

Fruit of the gods

There are endless tales and myths behind the intimate qualities of certain fruits. The Greek goddess of love, Aphrodite, the inspiration of the word "aphrodisiac," is credited in Greek mythology for being the first person to plant a pomegranate tree, a known symbol of fertility. So it's no surprise that nature's candy such as figs, strawberries and pomegranates are all a part of the historic lore of sexy fruits. Imagine pairing strawberries with chocolate and sharing them with your sweetheart, or drizzling figs in honey for a deliciously seductive dessert.

Champagne

As a certified cheese professional and level one sommelier, Sara Arbabian, co-owner of The Rind and La

Crosta Pizza Bar, says her "Brie and Bubbles" event on Sunday, Feb. 16 is all about treating oneself.

Led by Arbabian, this guided pairing features five sparkling wines and creamy, brie-styled cheese from around the world. The class will explore how the two vary regionally in taste, texture and, in the case of sparkling wine, by name.

"Valentine's Day is a time when people treat each other through actions of love—and decadent, luxurious foods and beverages are a common theme," she says. "I think having that luxurious experience in your mouth, with your senses, with your sense of sight and smell and taste and touch—I think it's beautiful." *La Crosta, 330 3rd St., 1 p.m., tickets are \$69. lacrostopizzabar.com.*

Casanova's secret

Ever heard of Casanova? Well, in his 18th century heyday, Giacomo Casanova was a fan of the ladies. He was also said to be an alchemist, scam artist and spy. In his autobiography, *The Story of My Life*, Casanova doesn't shy from sharing stories of his intimate relationships. He also credited his diet of 50 oysters a day, which he said helped his sexual escapades. Besides the lore behind oysters, they do pack a good source of zinc (known

to help with healthy sperm counts). So next time you order a dozen oysters on the half shell, ponder whether Casanova may have been onto something. Still, the allure of eating oysters is more about the experience sharing these delectable molluscs with fresh-squeezed lemon, a splash of chile and fresh herbs.

Fine-crafted sweets

When walking into a specialty chocolate boutique, there's a distinct feeling of awe and excitement. Chocolate is the simplest way to say "I love you," not only during this holiday, but for any special occasion. At Andy's Candy Apothecary, customizable boxes of gourmet chocolates from Northern California's finest chocolatiers line its glass cases.

"They look beautiful, and they're sort of delicate and the flavors are very unique and interesting," says owner Andy Paul. "Food is a very sensory thing so giving somebody a very fine piece of chocolate, it's something you're going to eat and there's something very intimate about it."

Paul recommends salted or passion fruit caramel chocolates from Purr Chocolat Sacramento and Michael Mischer Chocolates in Oakland. *1012 9th St. and 500 J St., Suite 160, (916) 905-4115; andyscandystore.com.* □

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