

Guy's Guide to "V" Day

Heads up, men! Hopefully, your Superbowl party was an unqualified success. You've gotten the salsa and bean dip out of the carpet and you're not due to make that first payment on the new big screen plasma TV for 90 days.

Now is there anything else we've left out?

Well, if I've got to remind you that Valentine's Day is coming up next week, you may be forgetting how the "yin and yang" of domestic bliss works. All the time that your bride spent cooking wings, making beverage runs and gently reminding you and your buddies to use coasters on the coffee table that has been passed down through six generations of her family, she was NOT thinking about the point spread between Seattle and those other guys.

She was contemplating the next big holiday and muttering under her breath something about paybacks and starch in your underwear if you don't do something extra nice for her on February 14th.

Every big event needs a plan and I'm going to try to help you if you're willing to think "out of the box" this year. You are almost out of time and I stress that you'd better get a move on if your serious about rocking her world. Forget that Valentine's Day is actually next Tuesday...you can't make much of an impact on a Tuesday so lets think Saturday and shock her with not only remembering but doing something early.

Next, forget about restaurants. Even if you aren't a great cook, the fact that you tried to do something with your own hands adds bonus points. I'm going to try to help you here. Remember...she keeps every hand made card the kids have given her as though they were stuffed with diamonds and tosses the \$5 Hallmark from you every time. Handmade is good.

Second, you have to clear the work space while you make this all come together. I'm thinking a gift certificate to one of those spa things for Saturday and time it so that she's over there getting the living daylights pampered out of her for at least 4 hours. You'll need that time to put together your Saturday evening "piece d'resistance." It won't hurt at all that she will come home relaxed, happy and glowing from all of the attention.

Now you can set the stage. Get out the good china and crystal. Put down a pressed, clean tablecloth and really set the table. We're talking a vase with fresh flowers (roses work great), candles in abundance and when you turn down the lights you want to turn up the music. Pick something that she likes and make sure it sets the right mood. I'm not thinking bluegrass here, think soft and at a level that you can talk over.



I'm going to recommend a simple menu that allows you to prep ahead of time and is not complicated to prepare. Guys have a genetic code that allows most of them to handle steaks competently. Here's my simple instructions for a favorite steak dish and sides:

Braised Filet Mignon Medallions

(serves two)

2 (8 to 10 oz.) filet mignons, sliced into ½ inch thick slices
2 tablespoons butter
2 teaspoons minced garlic
fresh ground black pepper, to taste
sea salt, to taste
fresh parsley for garnish

Heat a heavy skillet, cast iron is my favorite, to medium high. Add butter and melt then add garlic and allow it to cook for about 30 seconds. Add in your slices of filet and allow them to cook for about 1 to 1 ½ minutes per side. Do not over cook and this entrée should be prepared just before serving so that it will go directly to the table from the skillet. Salt

and pepper to taste during cooking. Place on your plates in a fan arrangement and top with drippings from the skillet and a sprig of fresh parsley.

Parsley Red Potatoes

(serves two)

This dish can be prepared ahead of time!

4 medium red potatoes, scrubbed
3 tablespoons butter, room temperature
2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley
salt and pepper to taste

Place your potatoes in a medium, heavy bottomed pan with lid. Cover with water and bring to a boil. Allow to cook just until a knife will easily pierce the potatoes to the center. Drain water off of potatoes, add butter and parsley, gently break up potatoes so that they are still in ½ inch chunks and mix in parsley and butter thoroughly. Cover and hold to side. This dish can easily be reheated on the warm setting of your stove for 20 minutes before serving. Watch that you don't scorch them and stir them again before serving.

Fresh Asparagus Spears with Lemon

(serves two)

about 10 spears of fresh asparagus
1 teaspoon water
fresh lemon wedges

Place spears in a rectangular casserole dish that is microwave safe. Add the teaspoon of water and seal with Saran wrap. Cut a 1 inch slit in the top and hold in the refrigerator until dinner time. This dish can be cooked in the microwave just before serving dinner. The microwave allows the asparagus to retain a touch of crispness. Use you microwave on the high setting for approximately 4 to 6 minutes depending on the power of your oven. If it is still too crisp recover and extend the cooking time until it suits you. Squeeze on fresh lemon before serving and place an extra wedge on the plate.



I would serve a nice sparkling wine at the beginning of the meal and you may want to go to a good favorite red to compliment your steak later. If your ladylove enjoys a sweeter styled wine I would open up with the German **Blau-Gold Mild Sekt** to start with which is filled with ripe tones of apple and peach. If tastes run to a dryer style, the **Duval-Leroy Paris Brut Champagne** is a delight with toasty stylings and a heady layer of yeast and dryer citrus.

I'll leave dessert up to your imagination and I wish you the best of success in your project. If you have any questions please give us a jingle at 888-288-0668 or visit us online at www.winedog.com. Here's to all of the wonderful ladies out there. We'll never be able to do enough to let you know how much we appreciate you! Cheers.