



14th
Feb

Valentine's Day Party

Get ready for a lovely time!

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Valentine's Day Party!



Hi, are you ready for some fun?

Valentine's Day - some say it's a holiday promoted by the greetings card industry, others see it as a chance to celebrate love. Personally I see it as a brilliant excuse to appreciate the lovely friends in my life and the love that surrounds me - who says it has to be romantic!

Whether you're loved up or not, we are going to have a great day, with some fabulous virtual therapy - you'll see what I mean....

There is lots to do, none of it is lovey-dovey and all of it is really fun. So jump in and let me whisk you away on a fun adventure!

Claire x.

Shopping List

Valentines Buns

- ♥ 1 tablespoon / 1 packet dried fast action yeast
- ♥ 1 tablespoon caster sugar
- ♥ 300ml (1/2 pint) warm milk
- ♥ 130g (3/4 cup) butter, cut into small pieces
- ♥ 615g (4 cups) strong plain flour
- ♥ 240g currants or raisins
- ♥ 1 tablespoon caraway seeds
- ♥ 1 tablespoon honey

Chocolate Dipped Strawberries

- ♥ Strawberries, 1 punnet
- ♥ 100g chocolate, your choice; but Bournville/semi-sweet dark is my fave!

Heart Shaped Sandwiches

- ♥ Bread, 2 slices per sandwich
- ♥ Butter or other spread
- ♥ Filling of your Choice—for example jam, honey, chocolate spread cream cheese, thinly sliced ham or cheese
- ♥ Heart shaped biscuit/cookie cutter or a knife.

Saint Valentine's Cookies

- ♥ 115g soft light brown sugar
- ♥ 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- ♥ 100mls double cream
- ♥ 1/2 grated lemon zest
- ♥ 100mls treacle or molasses
- ♥ 330g plain flour
- ♥ 1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
- ♥ Heart shaped cookie cutter
- ♥ Edible icing, coloured sugar, edible glitter—available from supermarkets and cake decorating shops

Valentine's Clove Apples

- ♥ 1 apple, no bruises
- ♥ Cloves
- ♥ Skewer or cocktail stick
- ♥ Ribbon or string.

Quick Cheat Alternatives

Here are some suggestions:-

- ♥ Jammy Dodgers—perfect, heart centres!
- ♥ Sweets—e.g. Haribo hearts, jelly kisses, love hearts
- ♥ Roses chocolates
- ♥ As an alternative to the Valentine's Buns, you could have currant buns or even hot cross buns.
- ♥ Gingerbread men or ready to roll gingerbread - Sainsbury's.



Valentine's Day Party in your Pad!



You wake up and feel a flutter of excitement because you've got some special plans, it won't be another boring day for you!

You hear a toot-toot of a horn and look out of your window to see a sleek and shiny sports car waiting outside. It looks like a car from the movies, the top is down and leaning against the door is a good looking driver who looks at you and smiles. With a sweeping gesture, they open the passenger door and you feel a fizz of anticipation. You feel yourself being called to come out and play!

You're so excited, that it only takes a matter of minutes for you to get ready and you step out into the bright February sunshine. The sky is brilliantly blue with big white puffy clouds, floating above you like candy floss. The sun is warm and you take in a deep breath of the fresh air.

You take your sunglasses out of your bag and put them on, if you're going to be chauffeur driven, you have to look the part. Today is all about feeling like a superstar! The driver holds your door open and you slip into the passenger seat, feeling supported in the most comfortable leather seat you've ever sat in. The door closes with a gentle thump and you are safely cocooned in the small space. You breathe in the new car smell, a mixture of leather, polish and pine, with a hint of something you can't quite put your finger on. Then you realise what it is – money! It's the smell of luxury and expense, a smell you decide to wallow in! You can sense it soaking into your skin and you feel like you're instantly becoming chicer and richer just by being there. You could definitely get used to this!

The driver climbs in beside you and starts the engine, which comes to life with a roar. The throaty growl sends goose bumps across your skin; and you can feel excitement building in the few seconds before they gun the engine and the car slips out onto the road.

With grace and ease the driver slides in and out of the traffic, avoiding the other cars and pedestrians. You notice lots of envious glances from both men and women. You can't help grinning and are tempted to give them a little wave!





The car really comes to life as soon as it hits the open country roads and heads away from civilisation. The hedges, fields and trees whizz by you in a green blur; but you don't realise how fast you're going until you glance at the speedometer and your heart gives a lurch as the needle moves further and further round the dial. You glance quickly at the driver who is sitting casually; obviously very confident and talented by the way they handle every curve and bend with grace, barely changing speed as you navigate through the countryside. You realise you feel completely safe and relaxed.

The wind blows past you, buffeting your face and tearing at your clothes; but it makes you feel exhilarated and you laugh at the sheer joy of being there. You have no idea where you're going; but you hope you don't get there too soon!

Closing your eyes, you enjoy the feeling of warmth from the sun as it shines down upon you. All sense of time and motion fades away as you enjoy the sensation of sun and wind. It's not until you pass into the cooler, dark shade that you open your eyes and look around you.

You see that you have entered a tree lined avenue and the car's tyres send up a small shower of gravel as you zoom up it. Ahead of you, you can make out the shape of a building; but it's not until you drive past the last two trees and reemerge into the sunshine, that you can take in the magnificent house that awaits you. You've reached your destination!

Leaning back in your seat, your eyes move from side to side, trying to take in the huge stately home. The beautiful, square looking building is incredibly grand. The creamy white stone and sharp lines give it a dramatic elegance and the balcony





and pillars remind you of Buckingham Palace.

The driver pulls the car to a stop just outside the front entrance and jumps out to open your door. You climb out. You need to stretch after the small interior of the car.

A figure rounds the corner of the house and you see it's Claire. She waves and hurries to greet you.

"You made it! Did you enjoy the journey? That car is amazing, very dashing! I'm so pleased you're here, I've got lots planned for us today. Come with me, the rest of the party guests are waiting."

You expect to go inside; but Claire turns and head back around the corner and you follow, crunching your way over the deep gravel. As you round the side of the building, your attention is caught by the beautiful green expanse to your left. The perfect manicured lawn of smooth grass stretches for acres in front of you. It's like a sea of green, punctuated by stunning bursts of colour from the glorious flower beds.

A little way off you can just make out a group of people and what look like brightly coloured balloons attached to a big black net, similar to a giant tennis net.

Your curiosity has been roused and you look to Claire for answers. She smiles mischievously. "Since today is Valentine's Day, famous for its cheeky cherubs, we are going to be learning some archery. You're going to be shown how to shoot using a bow and arrow."

You look at her with a look of slightly stunned amazement. Archery? A bow and arrow? Have you suddenly been transported back in time? Visions of Robin Hood, green



costumes and men in tights flash before your eyes.

"I can understand your hesitation; it seems rather medieval. And yes it may have been done for 10,000 years; but is still really popular all over the world. It was first used for hunting; but is now mainly done for sport and has been a regular at the Olympics since 1972."

"It's a challenge; but it's fun to do. Come on, let's go and join the others."

You both head down the smooth white stone steps and stride out across the soft, springy grass towards the other party guests. As you get closer, you see that they are lined up in front of a row of round targets, watching as a man demonstrates what to do.

You and Claire find a space to stand and watch the archer. In the man's hand is a long, curving wooden bow, he draws back the string and it looks like something out of Robin Hood. Suddenly you hear a gentle hiss and then a thud. Looking at the target you see that an arrow has appeared, as if by magic, sticking out of the yellow central circle.

The man lowers the bow and then turns to you with a smile. "Hi I'm Rob, today you are going to be learning some archery. I'll be showing you how to shoot using a bow and arrow."

"It takes practise; but we've got all day and have lots of targets to shoot at. I'll be coming round to help each of you; but for now just watch as I take a shot."

Rob raises the bow up and points towards the targets. There are two rows, one about







nine metres or ten yards away. The other is thirty five metres away, that's about forty yards. Behind them is a huge black net which towers above you. This is to catch any stray arrows.

Rob stands side on to the target, with his feet spread shoulder width apart. In one swift, smooth motion he takes an arrow and places it against the bow, resting it on his hand. You hear it click onto the string.

He places the arrow between his fingers, with two below and one above; he draws back the string, while slowly raising the bow up. With a twang he releases the string and you watch as the arrow arcs down towards the furthest targets. It lands with a faint thump in the centre of a yellow circle.

You draw in a sharp breath at his display of talent and everybody claps. "It looks impressive," Rob agrees; "but that's just a basic shot. You should see what people do in competitions."

"Now it's your turn. First you get to choose your target for today. There's a standard circle target, with the traditional brightly coloured rings: the outer ring is black, and within that is a smaller blue one, then a red one and the smallest area at the centre of the circle is yellow, which is called gold. The aim is to get your arrow as close to the gold centre as possible. The closer you get, the more points you get.

"We've also got a few other options for target practise today. If you've got a letter, maybe a horrible form or even an old bill, you can use that and shoot at it to your heart's delight. It can be extremely therapeutic. The choice is yours."



You consider your options carefully. The standard target does look classic; but there are a few old documents that have brought you nothing but stress that you would happily shoot. You look round you at the other guests and seeing that they are going for a range of different targets, you make your choice.

You tell Rob which you feel like. "Great, now we can put it up on the boss, that's what we call the target stand."

You all follow him down to the first row of targets and each person attaches their target to their boss. As you get closer, you realise that it's just a round disc made of straw. When you walk back to the start, you can still see your target clearly from where you are. It doesn't seem that far away; but you're guessing it won't be as easy as it looks. Rob walks back to you. "Now the target's up, we need to get you equipped with your bow and arrows. First you'll need to put on a wrist guard called a bracer, just to protect the arm that holds the bow from getting pinged by the string when it comes flying back, otherwise you can end up with a big bruise!"

He hands you a curved piece of strong leather with straps on, and helps you to fasten it on to your non-dominant hand, the one that will hold the bow. He then gives you a small piece of leather with two holes in it.

"You'll also need a finger tab to help you grip the string," he explains. "This is to slip over the two inner fingers of your writing hand."

You can feel the smooth, supple material against the palm of your hand. It feels beautifully soft.

"You're all set. Now we need to work on your stance," Rob says.

You copy the way he stands side on, your body facing away from the target; but your arms, feet and head turned towards it. Rob then hands you the bow and you can feel the perfect balance as it swings slightly and then comes to rest in a long, straight, vertical line in front of you. You increase your grip and Rob hands you an arrow.

"Hold the arrow between your index finger and middle finger. Can you see there's a little notch on the arrow? That's called the nock and you pull the nock onto the string." You do as he says and the arrow clicks into place.

"Now rest the arrow on your hand and against the bow." You fumble with the arrow, trying to get it to stay where you want it and Rob leans over and helps you to adjust it. Now it sits comfortably braced against your hand and the bow.

"That's great. Now, I want you to take a deep breath, and as you do, pull the string straight back towards you. Keep pulling until the string touches your nose and your hand touches your jaw. Then hold it while you sight on the target."

Concentrating hard, you do as Rob instructs. Taking a long, slow breath you pull the taught string back. You feel your muscles working in your arms and across your chest and back; but you keep pulling until you can feel the cool string, which is actually more like a wire, against your nose. The arrow is at eye level and you can look past it to the target in front of you.

"Now look along the arrow and focus on where on the target you want to hit."



Concentrate on the centre of the target and then open the fingers holding the string. Your back hand should stay where it is or let it move back past your ear!

"Make sure you open the hand holding the string; it's tempting to release the one holding the bow or both hands altogether and you end up dropping the lot!" You take another deep breath and look along the arrow to the target. You can see the exact spot you want to hit and in your mind's eye you can visualise the arrow going into your target. You open your hand in a quick motion and the string springs forward, launching the arrow from the bow. It moves really fast, blink and you'll miss it; but within a second you hear the thud and can see the long thin arrow sticking out of the target! It's only just on the piece of paper, not where you were aiming for; but at least you hit the target!

Claire lets out a cheer and you look across to see that she has also hit the target; but like you it's only just! She turns to you and gives you a high five.

"Congratulations!" Rob says and you can tell he's pleased. "Not bad for a first attempt. Have another go."

He hands you another arrow and you follow the same process. "This time, aim slightly more to the right of the target, instead of at the centre. It will help to counteract the breeze."

You do as Rob has said, pulling back the arrow and then aiming it in a slightly different position. You feel the tension in your muscles and the taut bow. Again you release the arrow; but ignoring its progress, you are already searching the target to see where it will land. It's slightly nearer the centre and you grin at your obvious progress.

"To get good shooting results, you have to learn excellent body-eye coordination. It means that you can perform identical movements when drawing the bow. It's all about precision. And practise, lots and lots of practise." Rob explains.

Feeling slightly addicted, you can't wait for Rob to hand you the next arrow; but this time the arrow goes too wide and sails high in the air. It misses the target completely.

"That's okay," Rob says reassuringly. "That's why we have the big net behind the targets, to catch any stray arrows. Most people miss the target completely to start off with, so you're doing really well."

"I'm going to go and see how everyone else is doing. You can help yourself to the rest of the arrows in you stand."

You've got nine more arrows and you systematically work through them. Sometimes you hit the target, at other times you miss all together. It takes lots of concentration and you can feel your body working with muscles you didn't even know you had.

There's a real sense of satisfaction when the arrows do hit the target, especially as they get closer and closer to the centre of the paper. You realise you're grinning from ear to ear. It's a lot of fun!

When the arrows are all gone, you look up and see that a couple of people are shooting their final arrows and the rest are waiting to go down and check their targets. Once the last arrow has landed with a thud in the target, Rob says "Come on, let's go and see your targets and retrieve the arrows."





As you get close you can see that the ones that hit the target are fairly spread out, several arrows are missing; but a couple are close to the centre! You hold onto an arrow and, as Rob instructs, pull it straight out of the target. Once you've removed them all, you can take your target off the boss. You hold the piece of paper up to the light and can see all the round holes punched into the paper. They are about the size of a round pencil and the target looks holey, like Swiss cheese!

"Do you fancy shooting some balloons now?" Rob asks you all, gesturing to a large bunch of balloons tied to a weight at the side of the range. These were the balloons you'd noticed when you arrived.

"We've got lots of colours, shapes and sizes so choose the ones you want." Rob says as he unties some of the bright rainbow coloured balloons from the bunch and brings them across. Everybody makes a selection, some picking bright red hearts, others, sticking to one colour only and some choosing a rainbow selection. You make your choice and Rob hands you the strings. You can feel them tugging, trying to get away and for a second you feel a slight pang that they are going to be used for target practice.

No one else seems too worried though; they are busy attaching their balloons to their boss. You watch the balloons bobbing in the light breeze. They look very cheery and oblivious to the sudden pop to come!

You attach your own balloons and then head back to where you started. You pick up the bow again, and then retake your stance.

Balancing the arrow and drawing the bow back is much easier this time, you're definitely getting the hang of it.





Sighting on the balloons in the centre of the target, you focus, aim and fire! You hear the bang before you see the balloon vanish. It's almost too quick to see. You can just make out the remnants of the rubber hanging from where the arrow sticks out of the target. You let out a little cheer!

A succession of bangs makes it clear that others have been equally successful.

The next arrow looks like it's going to be spot on; but the breeze blows the balloon to the side and the arrow lands where the balloon was, just seconds before. You sigh with frustration before taking aim again. This time you hit the balloon with a satisfying pop!

"This is so much fun!" Claire says, lowering her bow. "You're doing really well. Not that I'm volunteering to stand with an apple on my head for you, at least not yet!"

"You can keep practising for as long as you want, there are more balloons to shoot at as well as a stack of targets. When you've had enough let me know, as we've got another treat in store."

Eventually your arms begin to tire and you think you're ready for a rest. You put the bow down and turn to look for Claire.





"Follow me," Claire says to the gathered party guests. "We are all going to explore this beautiful garden."

The acres of manicured lawn stretch out invitingly in front of you, perfectly flat and smooth. Claire sets off across it and you happily follow her and the other guests.

She leads you towards an archway of colour and as you draw near you see that it's a tunnel of trailing roses, that arc over the neat gravel path. The flowers are in full bloom and as you pass beneath them you get a waft of their beautiful perfume.

"You can now have a wander around the garden," Claire tells you. "Feel free to roam where you please; but keep your eyes open for the band stand. We're going to gather there for a delicious afternoon tea. There's no rush though, take as long as you want to discover the garden."

Without any real sense of direction or purpose, you begin to walk, letting your direction be guided by your whims. It's like stepping into a secret garden, the paths weave in and out of the flower beds, disappearing round curves and bends before opening out onto small clearings.

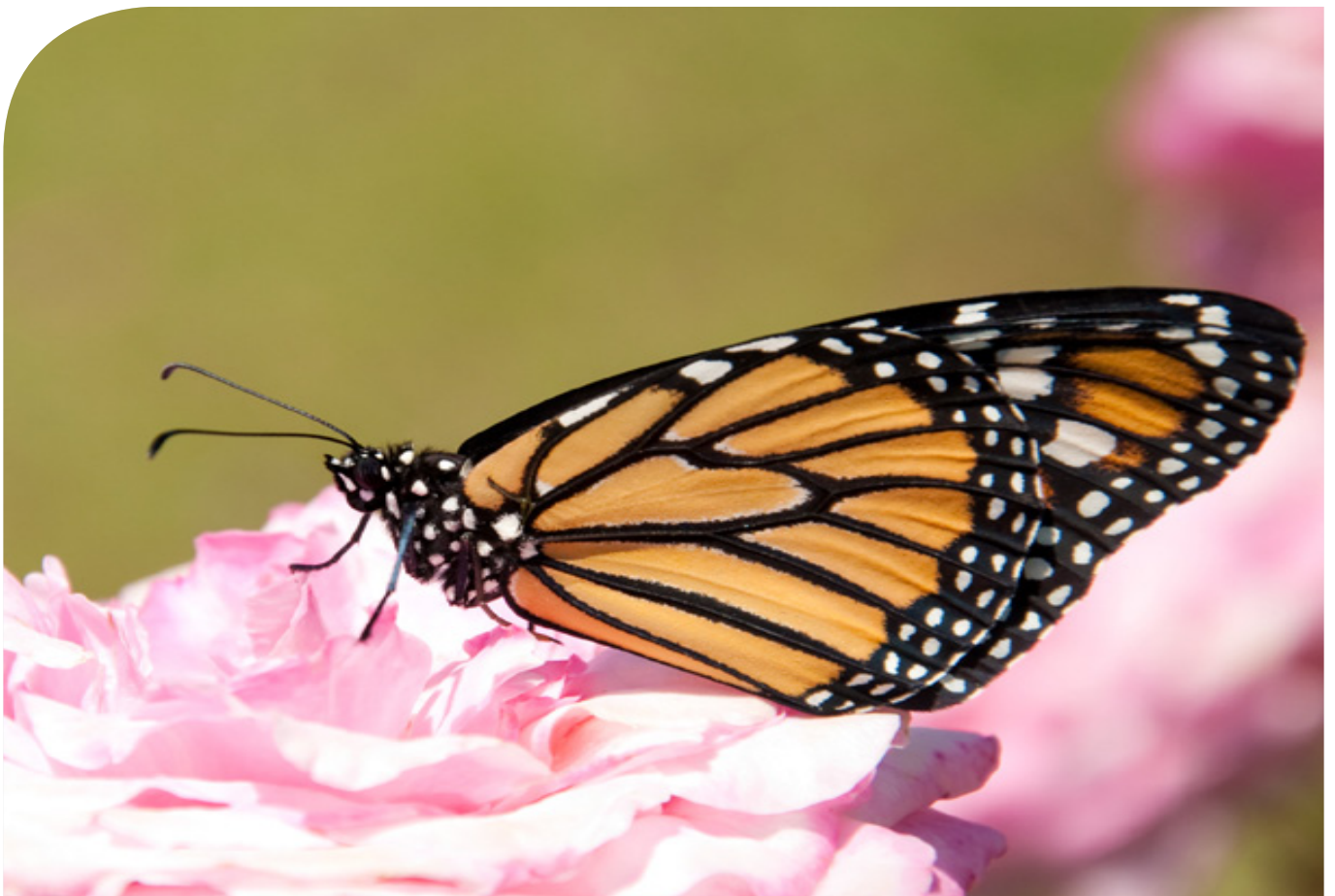
You're drawn to the nearest flower bed which is a riot of colour. As you approach, you see it is full of roses of all shapes and sizes, in different shades of pink. The first is a very pale pink, so light it's almost a creamy white. You bend down, cupping the big fat bloom in your hands and take a deep breath, smelling the glorious scent of the rose. It's floral; but there's a slight hint of something deeper, more woody. The petals are soft and silky and you can't resist running your thumb across the flower.

You move on to the next rose and the flowers on this one are a pretty, baby pink. You sniff again; this one smells different, slightly sweeter with a hint of vanilla.

You catch a flutter of movement out of the corner of your eye and glancing up you see a beautiful orange and black butterfly take to the air. Its small, graceful form glides past you and you have to resist the urge to reach out and touch its fragile beauty.

Seeing the butterfly has tuned your eye into noticing the amount of life within the garden. Birds and insects live happily in this perfect natural paradise. There are other butterflies resting on the flowers, bathing in the warm sun. Two fly through the air in a companionable dance, moving back and forth across the grass.

The next rose you go to, you hear a buzzing hum and see a fluffy bumble bee nestling into the petals, searching for the sweet nectar inside. You can see flecks of pollen on his fuzzy yellow and black stripes. The bright colours and delicious scents have the same enticing effect on you both; but you decide to leave him in peace, silently asking him to do the same. The bee seems to agree, ignoring you completely; he has much more important things to worry about.





You're drawn from one bush to the next, as if you're pulled by a magnetic force and at each one you stoop to smell the rose.

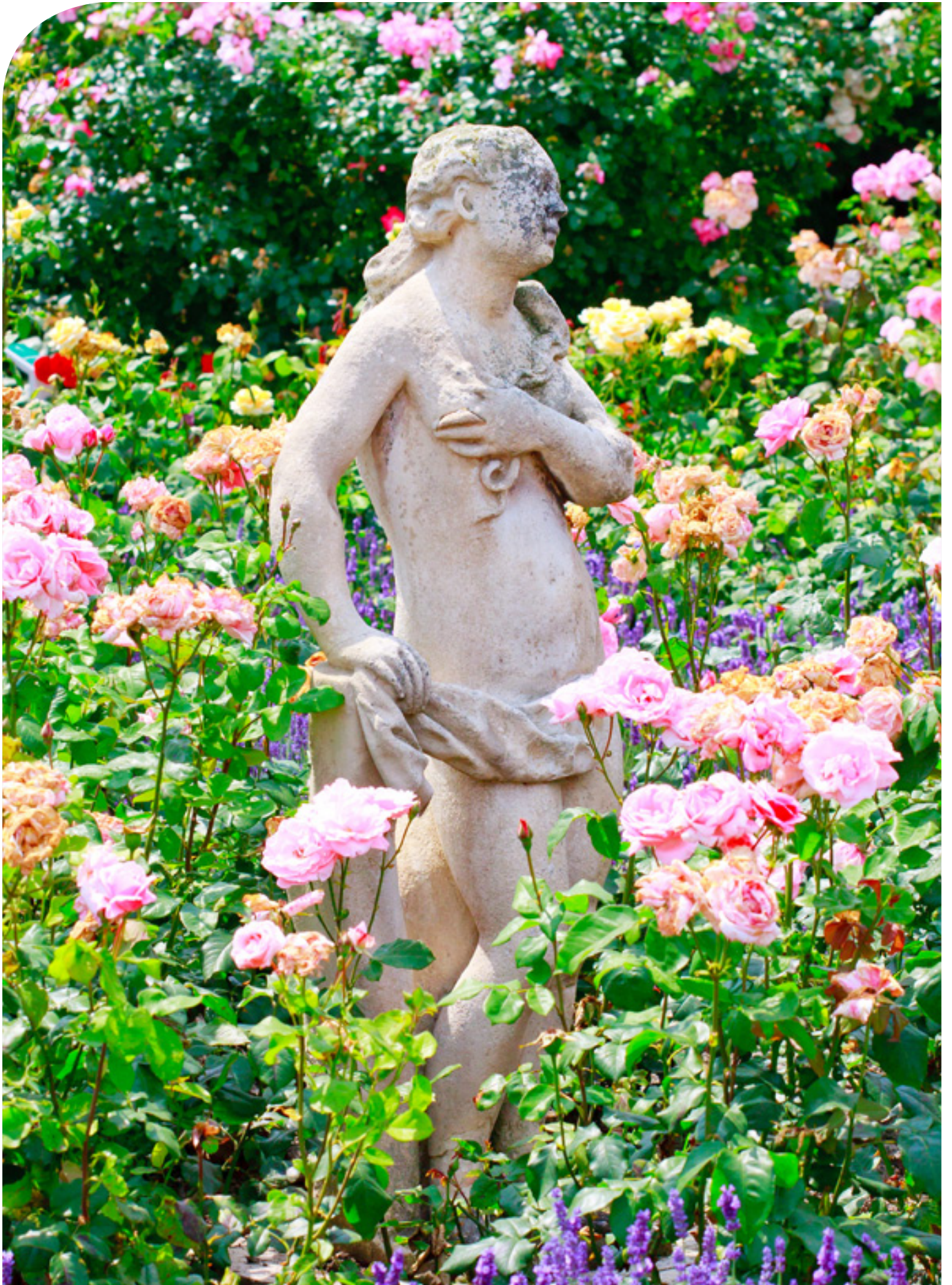
You hear someone walking across the grass and look up to see that Claire has joined you. "They're beautiful aren't they? I can't believe that nature created them and each bloom turns out perfectly.

"I love how much variety there is too. I used to think a rose was just a rose, obviously there were a couple of different colours; but when you come to somewhere like this you see there's so much variety, not just in colour; but also the number of blooms on a bush, the size of flower, even the shapes of the petals and the way they curl around each other.

"Personally I love the small and delicate ones;" Claire tells you. "They look so neat and perfect, truly classic. Don't get me wrong, the big ones are gorgeous too; but sometimes they can almost look a bit shaggy with so many petals. Which do you like best?"

Claire cups a particularly full bloom and dips her head, inhaling the perfume. "Wow, that one's gorgeous, quite strong; but not too overpowering. Have you noticed how different each rose smells? There are subtle scents within the overall perfume. A bit like with wine, chocolate or coffee. People become experts in picking up the different scents or notes.





"For example with some you get a hint of fruit like orange, lemon, nectarine or raspberry. Some smell of food like honey, tea, even wine, while others are spicier with notes of clove, bay or pepper.

"It's enough to make you hungry. In fact I don't know about you; but I think I'm starting to feel hungry. I'll leave you to finish looking round while I go and check that the afternoon tea is laid out.

"We'll be by the band stand when you're ready."

Claire leaves you, heading deeper into the garden and you decide to test your nose, to see if you can pick up some of the different scents she mentioned. You walk along the rose beds pausing beside each new flower.

Some of the roses have a very faint scent which you have to smell twice, to try to get a deeper smell. Inhaling and then holding the scent in your nostrils for as long as possible. Others are rich and perfumed and you can smell them before your nose gets close.

Which do you prefer subtle and gentle or strong and powerful? As with perfume, different people like different roses, it's a very individual choice.

The roses have been planted in a fading rainbow, you started in the light pink section and are now heading towards the deep pink, almost cerise coloured flowers, vivid magenta gives way to some which are a deep purple. They are very striking.

These lead on to a dark red, which almost looks black; but the red gets stronger on the next bushes, until it becomes a bright, blood red. You've now reached the classic Valentine's roses. Some are still in bud, while others are perfectly opened, displaying the tight blooms with curling petals inside. You reach down to take another deep breath, careful to avoid the dagger like thorns that are growing from this particular bush.

That's another thing you realise. Some of the roses are harmless, growing without any thorns, while some are more traditional with their sharp spiky points still on the stems. They look lethal, like miniature cats claws and you are very careful to avoid your arms and clothes from getting caught and scratched.

Up ahead the colours become lighter and brighter, with beds of deep orange, slipping to soft peach, before becoming a pure sunshine yellow. The colours lift your spirits and it's like looking at a living painting; you want to commit every colour, every detail to memory.

The roses have been drawing you further into the garden and you can hear the chatter of voices. Some of the other guests must have got here before you, because you follow the sound and round a bend, to discover the band stand, nestled among the flowers.





The guests are gathered around and Claire is handing out cups and saucers.

Walking across, you see that there is an ornate garden table which has been laid with a pretty china tea set. The sun shines off the gilt edges of the china and sparkles on the perfectly polished cutlery.

Some of the guests have already taken a seat. On seeing you Claire comes over. "Fantastic, you found your way to us. Choose somewhere to sit and I'll bring you over a drink. What would you like? We've got tea, coffee, fruit juice and mineral water."

You make your choice and then find a vacant seat. You sink down onto it and your attention is immediately caught by the spread of food laid out on the table. On three large cake stands are displayed an array of mouth watering treats, including perfect heart shaped sandwiches, miniature cakes and pretty decorated cookies with brightly coloured icing and edible gold. Your mouth begins to water.

Next to the stands are plates of shiny dark brown chocolate coated strawberries. You can just make out a hint of juicy red strawberry between the crisp chocolate shell and the bright green stalks. Your stomach rumbles and you can't wait to try some of the feast.





Claire returns with your drink, served in a delicate porcelain cup and saucer. You take it feeling it wobble in the saucer, making a faint jingling noise as you put it down.

"Feel free to help yourself," Claire tells the party. The question is where do you start? It all looks so tempting! Help yourself to anything you fancy.

Now all you need to do is sit back, relax and enjoy the feast in front of you. It feels beautifully warm sitting in the sunshine, the breeze is gentle and brings with it the slightly floral scent of the nearby flowers and the fresh, sharp tang of grass.

Watch the wildlife in the garden; it is home to many birds, they fill the air with their beautiful song. You may be lucky enough to spot a rabbit or two hopping past or grazing on the grass.

You dip in and out of the conversation, happy to let it flow around you as you enjoy the good food and good company. You let the tranquillity and peace soak into you and can feel yourself relaxing.

When you feel calm and rested you can head back to the car, where your driver will be waiting to take you home; but for now just enjoy your time in this beautiful garden.

Virtual Fun



Virtual Archery

Virtual archery doesn't just have to take place in our imaginations, we can have a go for real with some great online games. They can take some practise; but are a lot of fun. If you can, share your scores in the Facebook group.

♥ www.mousebreaker.com/games/eagleeye

♥ www.zewall.com/bow.htm

N.B. For the second game make sure you use the easy arcade mode at the bottom of the screen. Drag the cross to where you want to aim, checking for wind direction. Click on the Bend button and then click shoot. It takes a bit of getting used to and then is a lot of fun!

Alternatively, if you've got a games console with one of the popular sports/archery games then you can use that instead.

You can also watch some great videos online of real life archery shots.

♥ www.metacafe.com/watch/252811/ultra_precision_archery/

A rose by any other name...

Take a look at all the different roses you can get...

♥ www.davidaustinroses.com/english/Advanced.asp?Pageld=1902

Find out more about the different scents of roses...

♥ www.rosegathering.com/fragrances.html



History of Valentine's Day!



Valentine's Day has been celebrated for about 1,500 years, mainly in Europe. The celebration has spread to other parts of the world; but has been met by opposition by some countries and cultures, who see it as a Western festival.

There is debate as to how Valentine's Day first started; but it's said to be a combination of Christian and Roman festivals.

Who was Valentine?

The Catholic Church recognizes at least three different saints named Valentine or Valentinus, all of whom were martyred. It's not clear who really inspired the celebration; but it is generally attributed to Saint Valentine, the Christian martyr.

Saint Valentine was a priest during the third century in Rome. Emperor Claudius II believed that women made men weaker, so he banned the young men in his army from marrying. Saint Valentine went against the Emperor, marrying couples in secret. Unfortunately Saint Valentine was caught and condemned to death. It is said that he was either executed or buried on February 14th 269 A.D.

Saint Valentine is the patron saint of beekeepers, engaged couples, epilepsy, fainting, greetings, happy marriages, love, lovers, plague, travellers, and young people. Quite a mix and not all romantic! Valentine is often portrayed with birds and roses in iconography.

There is a shrine for Saint Valentine in Whitefriar Street Carmelite Church in Dublin, Ireland.



Another reason for 14th February?

Many believe 14th February was chosen for the date of the Christian festival, because it coincides with the eve of the ancient Roman fertility festival Lupercalia, which was the official beginning of spring. The Catholic Church attempted to replace the pagan festival with a celebration of Christian martyrs.

A popular celebration

Saint Valentine has always been a popular saint; but Valentine's Day wasn't really celebrated until around the seventeenth century. By the middle of the eighteenth century, people of all social classes exchanged small tokens of affection or handwritten notes. It has continued to be acknowledged, mainly as a celebration of romantic love; but love has many forms and the traditional ideals are being challenged. Valentine's Day should be a day when we appreciate all the love in our life, no matter where or from whom it comes from.

Who is Cupid?

Cupid is the most famous of Valentine's symbols. Everybody recognises the chubby little boy, with curly hair, wearing a nappy (diaper). On his back are little, feathery, white wings and he is armed with a bow and arrows. He's pictured as cute and angelic, even slightly mischievous, when he's using his arrows to pierce people's hearts and make them fall in love.

Where is he from?

Cupid comes from Roman mythology. He is the god of erotic love and beauty, his alternative in Greek lore is Eros. Cupid is the son of Venus, the goddess of love and beauty and Mercury, the messenger god. This is why Cupid is said to be fast on his feet, because of his father and enamoured with love, like his mother.

What does he do?

Cupid is responsible for making people fall in love, quickly! The arrows symbolise desires and emotions of love. Cupid aims at Gods and humans alike, causing them to fall deeply in love.



Valentine's Buns



An old tradition was to give Valentine's Buns or Plum Shuttles. A cross between a scone and a hot cross bun, they are made into shapes similar to the weavers' shuttles. This is because they come from the weaving and lace making areas of Rutland and Leicestershire, in England.

Ingredients

- ♥ 1 tablespoon / 1 packet dried fast action yeast
- ♥ 1 tablespoon sugar
- ♥ 300ml (1/2 pint) warm milk
- ♥ 130g (3/4 cup) butter, cut into small pieces
- ♥ 615g (4 cups) strong plain flour
- ♥ 240g currants or raisins
- ♥ 1 tablespoon caraway seeds
- ♥ 1 tablespoon honey

Instructions

1. Place the flour into a large bowl or onto a clean work surface.
2. Rub the butter into the flour and mix in the currants and caraway seeds. The aim is to make sure there are no lumps of butter left.
3. Mix the yeast, sugar and milk and gradually add to the flour. It's easier to use your hands to mix it together, incorporating the liquid in stages, because it gets stuck to a spoon. Use all the liquid, it may seem too wet; but will come together in the kneading and will ensure your buns don't dry out.
4. Knead the dough, pushing it out and pulling it back, until it is pliable and no longer sticky. This is normally about 10 minutes, so put on the radio and listen to about three songs.



5. Place in a large bowl, oil a piece of cling film and then cover, making sure it's air tight.
6. Leave the dough to rise in a warm place like an airing cupboard, Aga, or by a warm oven with the door partially open.
7. Leave the dough for at least an hour, until it has doubled in size and springy to the touch.
8. Knead gently, shape into about 12 long thin sausage shapes, with tapering ends and place them on a greased baking sheet.
9. Cover again and leave to prove for 1 hour.
10. Bake in a preheated oven at 230°C/450°F/gas mark 8 for about 15 minutes, until golden brown. To check they are done, give the bottoms a tap. If they are soft and doughy, then turn them over and bake for a few more minutes until the bottom is firm and golden, with a hollow sound when you tap them.
11. Brush the warm buns with honey.
12. Leave to cool slightly. The buns are delicious hot or cold. Serve as they are or with butter, cream cheese or even clotted

Chocolate Dipped Strawberries

These heart shaped fruits are perfect on Valentine's Day. Easy to make and totally moreish!

- ♥ Strawberries, 1 punnet
- ♥ 100g chocolate of your choice; but Bournville / semi-sweet dark chocolate is my personal favourite

1. Cover a baking tray or plate with greaseproof paper / baking parchment.
2. Break the chocolate into pieces and place in a microwavable bowl.
3. Heat in the microwave for 20 second intervals, stirring in between each session. It sounds like a hassle; but chocolate can burn really easily.
4. The chocolate is ready when it's almost completely melted, just keep stirring to melt the last few pieces.
5. Use a skewer or fork to spear a strawberry.
6. Dip it into the bowl and turn it around until it's completely coated. Then lift out and place on the lined tray.
7. Repeat with the rest of the strawberries and chocolate.
8. Leave the chocolate strawberries somewhere cool to set. They're ready once the chocolate goes hard.
9. Enjoy!



Saint Valentine's Cookies



This is an unusual cookie recipe which can be made in stages. It is similar to gingerbread. The cookies were cut into heart shapes, decorated with red and white frosting, sprinkled with red sugar, or even edible gilt.

Ingredients

- ♥ 115g soft light brown sugar
- ♥ 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- ♥ 100mls double cream
- ♥ 1/2 grated lemon zest
- ♥ 100mls treacle or molasses
- ♥ 330g plain flour
- ♥ 1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
- ♥ Heart shaped cookie cutter
- ♥ Icing, coloured sugar, edible glitter—available from supermarkets and cake decorating shops

Instructions

1. Beat the sugar into the cream until it is thickened but not stiff. Use an electric mixer for ease.
2. Add the molasses, ginger, and lemon rind and mix thoroughly.
3. Sift in the flour and the baking soda.
4. Knead until smooth. It's easiest done with your hands.
5. You can use the dough straight away or cover and leave in the fridge to chill for several hours, or even overnight.
6. Roll out the dough on a lightly floured surface, dusting the rolling pin with flour too.
7. Roll to one centimetre, 1/4" thick. Do not make it too thin as the biscuit will be very hard!



8. Dip the cookie cutter in flour and cut into shapes. Place on a non-stick baking tray.
9. Bake at 150°C, 275°F. for 15 minutes. They lose their glossy appearance when they are ready and get a very faint marbled look to them. Don't overcook as they become very hard; but don't worry if this happens, they are perfect for dunking in a hot drink.
10. Remove from the tray and allow to cool.
11. Decorate with the icing and sprinkles. Enjoy!

Heart Shaped Sandwiches

The sandwiches are delicious, easy to prepare and they look very cute.

- ♥ Bread, 2 slices per sandwich
- ♥ Butter or other spread
- ♥ Filling of your Choice— for example jam, honey, chocolate spread, cream cheese, thinly sliced ham or cheese
- ♥ Heart shaped biscuit/cookie cutter or a knife.

1. Make the sandwiches the way you normally would.
2. Use the cutter to cut out the perfect heart shapes. You may be able to get two cut from each sandwich if you position the cutter in the corner.
3. If you don't have a cutter, use a knife and turn the sandwich so the corner becomes the bottom point of the heart. Then cut two semi circles at the top.
4. Serve.

You can make a sweet or savoury bread and butter pudding with the remaining pieces of bread and crusts. Or you could feed the birds.

The cookie cutter can be used for cutting out hearts from other foods. Why not try toast, thin slices of fruit like mango, melon or large apples. You can even crack an egg into a metal cutter while in a frying pan, to make heart shaped fried eggs. Grease the metal cutter before adding to the pan and be careful as it will get very hot!

Quick Cheat Alternatives

If you can't / won't cook then you can buy some treats to have at your tea party. This will save venturing into the kitchen and all you need to do is unwrap them!

The supermarkets do lots of Valentine's themed foods during February, so you can send someone out or have a look online and get them to deliver to your door.

Here are some suggestions:-

- ♥ Jammy Dodgers—perfect, heart centres!
- ♥ Sweets—e.g. Haribo hearts, jelly kisses, love hearts
- ♥ Roses chocolates
- ♥ As an alternative to the Valentine's Buns, you could have currant buns or even hot cross buns.
- ♥ Gingerbread men make a good substitute to the cookies, you could even decorate them, giving them little outfits or big hearts.



Happy Valentine's Day!



How to say Happy Valentine's Day in different languages from around the world.

- ♥ Arabic: E'ed Hob Sa'eed!
- ♥ Chinese: Qing Ren Jie Kuai Le!
- ♥ Czech: Šťastný Valentýn!
- ♥ Danish: Glædelig Valentinsdag!
- ♥ Dutch: Gelukkige Valentijns Dag!
- ♥ Filipino: Maligayang Araw ng Mga Puso!
- ♥ Finnish: Hyvää Ystävänpäivää!
- ♥ Flemish: Gelukkig Valentijn!
- ♥ French: Joyeuse Saint-Valentin!
- ♥ German: Glücklichen Valentinstag! Alles Gute zum Valentinstag!
- ♥ Greek: Ευτυχισμένη μέρα του Αγίου Βαλεντίνου!
- ♥ Hebrew: hag valentine sameyah
- ♥ Hindi: Valentine divas ki shubkamnaye!
- ♥ Icelandic: Gleðilegan Valentínusardag!
- ♥ Italian: Buon San Valentino!
- ♥ Polish: Szczęśliwych walentynek!
- ♥ Portuguese: Feliz Dia dos Namorados!
- ♥ Romanian: Ziua indragostitilor!
- ♥ Spanish: Feliz dia de san valentin
- ♥ Swahili: Siku njema ya wapenzi!
- ♥ Swedish: Glad alla hjärtans dag!
- ♥ Thai: Sook-san-wan-Valentine!
- ♥ Turkish: Sevgililer günün kutlu olsun!

Movies!



Just because it's Valentine's Day, doesn't mean you have to go all mushy, unless you want to. Check out these lists of films, there's something for everyone!

Valentine's Films & Television

- ♥ *Valentine's Day*
- ♥ *I Hate Valentine's Day*
- ♥ *My Bloody Valentine* - horror!
- ♥ *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*
- ♥ *Cranford*
- ♥ *Far from the Madding Crowd*

Archery Films

- ♥ *Robin Hood Prince of Thieves*
- ♥ *Robin Hood Men in Tights*
- ♥ *Robin Hood* - Disney!
- ♥ *Robin Hood* - Russel Crowe version

Rose Films

- ♥ *Beauty & the Beast*
- ♥ *Alice in Wonderland*
- ♥ *The War of the Roses*



Why Send Valentine's Cards?



Valentine's cards are said to have begun because Saint Valentine, a jailed Roman priest, fell in love with a girl who visited him in prison, possibly the jailer's daughter. As Valentine was taken away to be executed, it is said that he left a note for her. He signed it 'From Your Valentine', an expression that is still used in cards today.

The custom of sending cards really became popular in the 1800's when commercial Valentine's cards were first introduced. Early examples were expensive creations in lace and satin; but they were replaced by cheaper mass produced cards. More expensive handmade cards are now coming back into fashion.

An estimated one billion valentine cards are sent each year, according to the Greeting Card Association. That makes Valentine's Day the second largest card-sending holiday of the year, after Christmas when an estimated 2.6 billion cards are sent.

Approximately 85% of all Valentines are purchased by women.

Making a Valentine's Card

Handmade cards are really special and can be sent to friends or family. They can be made with all sorts of craft materials, including stickers, ink stamps, glitter etc.

Traditionally they were decorated with delicate lace paper, as well as beads, sea shells, cones, berries, seeds, seaweed, moss, dried and artificial flowers.

Some were attached to string so that they could be suspended, as a three dimensional picture. For examples of Vintage Valentine's cards visit www.flickr.com/photos/vintagehalloweencollector/sets/72157594454512537/with/3239164782/

For inspiration visit www.activityvillage.co.uk/making_valentine_cards.htm and www.making-handmade-cards.com/valentine-card-ideas-main.html



What to write in your card?

It's a big decision what to put when writing your Valentine's card. Do you go romantic or jokey? Wax lyrical with romantic poetry or make up a funny rhyme? The French sent greetings cards known as cartes d'amities, expressing their love. Originally they were not specifically sent as Valentine's cards; but soon came to follow the popular English tradition.

The Danish valentine card is known as a "lover's card." Older versions of this greeting came in the form of a transparency which, when held up to the light, revealed the image of a lover handing his beloved a gift.

The Danish also send a gækkebrev, or "joking letter", an anonymously sent card containing a funny rhyme they made up.

For examples of what to write in your card see this website <http://blakeflannery.hubpages.com/hub/Valentines-Day-Messages-What-to-Write-in-a-Card>

How to sign it?

When signing your card, follow the Danish tradition of leaving your identity a mystery, by not signing your name. Instead sign the message with dots...one dot for each letter of your name.

In Denmark, if the person who receives the card guesses the name of the sender, they were usually rewarded with an Easter Egg later in the year. You don't need to tell anyone that though!

Virtual Valentine's Cards

The new craze in Valentine's Cards is online e-cards which are quick and easy to send. There are sites that provide free cards as well as some that you have to pay for. Like the original cards, many have pretty pictures and beautiful words, while others are fun and jokey. They also do animated cards with moving pictures and music. Check out www.bluemountain.com for some free and paid for cards.

Why not send a few to friends and family for Valentine's Day. Will you sign your name or leave them anonymous?



Clove Apples



Make your own Clove Apple – a traditional Kurdish gift symbolizing Adam and Eve's relation with the apple representing love and prosperity.

A clove apple smells wonderful and won't rot if the cloves are placed close together. They can be hung up in a cupboard or hallway.

They are an unusual Valentine's craft and were also mentioned in Little House in the Big Woods (of Little House on the Prairie fame) by Laura Ingalls Wilder.

You will need...

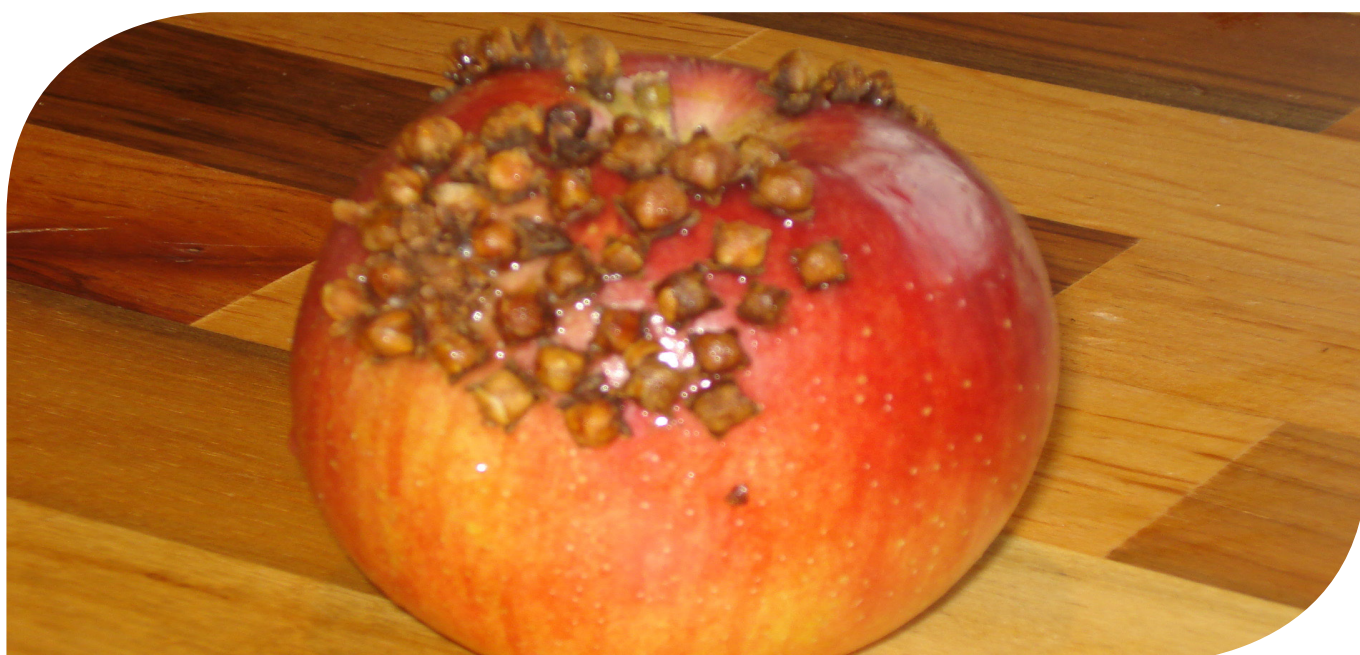
- ♥ 1 apple, no bruises
- ♥ Lots of Cloves
- ♥ Skewer or cocktail stick
- ♥ Ribbon or string
- ♥ Glue

What to do...

1. Place the apple on a plate and then take the skewer or cocktail stick and make about five little holes at the top of the apple. Space them out so that the cloves will sit comfortably next to each other.



2. Push the cloves into the holes. You can push them straight into the apple without the holes; but this is hard on your fingers.
3. You might want to use a cloth or tissue to wipe up any juice that comes out.
4. Now do a second row of holes beneath the first. Repeat the process going down the apple until one section is covered. It's a repetitive action that can get boring; but if you keep going actually becomes quite meditative and soothing.
5. For the clove apple to keep, the cloves must be stuck all over the apple, quite close together. They don't need to be touching each other, but you can't leave any blank spots on your apple if you want it to last.
6. Alternatively if you want to do a pretty design like hearts or stars, or even single lines round the apple, you can; but it won't keep for long. The choice is yours – depending on how much energy and the number of cloves you have.
7. To do a complex design, you can draw it on the apple with a felt tip pen and then follow the line with cloves. Keep them close together to cover up the line.
8. When your apple is ready, tie a piece of ribbon around the stem. You can add a drop of glue, to make sure the knot holds. Hang somewhere to admire and enjoy the scent, with remnants of Christmas past. You can put it in a wardrobe to scent the clothes or just have it up as an unusual decoration.



Valentine's Crafts!



Felt Crafts

- ♥ Stuffed Hearts www.designsponge.com/2011/02/sewing-101-stuffed-hearts.html
- ♥ Roses - www.howjoyful.com/2011/06/felt-rose-tutorial-and-pattern/
www.ohmyhandmade.com/2011/uncategorized/tutorial-make-a-long-stem-felt-rose/
- ♥ Dahlias - www.notmartha.org/archives/2010/05/06/mothers-day-felt-dahlia-corsage-a-few-notes/
- ♥ Hearts - <http://96195.com/pic-576.html>
- ♥ Brooches - <http://cheezburger.com/6234246400>

Even More Crafts...

- ♥ www.hobbycraft.co.uk/Pages/Ideas/Search.aspx?Occasion=11
- ♥ <http://jamiebrock.hubpages.com/hub/Great-Valentines-Day-Crafts>
- ♥ <http://homeandgarden.craftgossip.com/9-valentine-crafts/>
- ♥ www.squidoo.com/valentinecrafts

Valentine's Printables. Find some great crafts that you can print and use.
www.babble.com/home/10-free-valentine-printables/

Valentine's Crafts. These are slightly more involved projects; but are really gorgeous!
www.babble.com/crafts-activities/10-cute-crafts-for-valentines-day/

Or why not make a card, scrapbook page or any other craft you feel inspired to create, to remember your Valentine's Day Party. You could make cards and send them to family and friends, to tell them about your experience - make them envious of your social life!

