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Naughty

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HAUTE IN THE KITCHEN

Emily Ellyn, known as the Retro Rad Diva because of her penchant for vintage-inspired looks—think cat-eye glasses, high heels, and poodle skirts—rose through the culinary ranks starting at age 12. Now, with years of experience, a catering company, and numerous Food Network appearances, she's more than proved she belongs in this male-dominated industry.

"I don't have to look like the boys," Ellyn says. "Honestly, it's all about hard work."

With her hectic schedule, no one could ever accuse the chef of taking it easy. Even so, Ellyn recently created her own line of couture aprons to share her love of cooking and pin-up fashion. Her aprons have a Marilyn Monroe appeal with ruffled hems and hourglass silhouettes. From plump red tomatoes to sexy, hand-drawn models in coifs and cut-offs, her store offers a variety of playful cotton prints, all of which are hand-sewn in the United States.

"It's more than just the feel," Ellyn says of her love of cooking in style. "It's the whole throwback to the 'Leave It to Beaver' era that I love so much. You know, the fact that June Cleaver always has this grace about her, she could do anything."

For Ellyn, cooking allows her to unwind, and doing so while wearing a cute apron "hides your flaws." She isn't referring to pudge, though the designs are flattering and fabulously bold.

"It's carefree. Even though it's not perfect," Ellyn says, "you don't have to worry about the stress in your life."

Ellyn has turned a stressful career into a form of meditation with her infectious, positive attitude, clearly reflected in her whimsical aprons.

"It's one thing to throw on a chef's coat. And I will—I'm more than qualified." But as Ellyn points out, "I'm just as comfortable wearing what I want to wear and looking good doing it."

Want your own couture apron? Visit her store at EmilyEllyn.com

—Laura Adiletta



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EDIBLE INGREDIENT

“IN THE MOOD” FOODS

The History and Science of Aphrodisiacs

BY EMILY ELLYN | PHOTOS BY LAURA WATILO BLAKE



Recently I've had an old adage ringing through my head—"The way to a man's heart is through his stomach." During these cold winter days, I also find myself thinking how nice, or naughty, it might be to heat things up a little. So let's take a closer look at aphrodisiacs.

The word *aphrodisiac* originates from Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of sexual love, beauty, pleasure, and procreation. In present day, Merriam-Webster defines aphrodisiacs as any substance that arouses the senses, increases sexual desire, and may even improve sexual performance.

We organize aphrodisiacs into either psychophysiological compounds (affecting sight, smell, hearing, and touch) or ingestible compounds (food, drink, and natural or synthetic medicaments). All arouse the senses. There are those that warm the body. Many are exotic. Some edibles even look like genitalia.

In *The Art of Love*, the Roman poet Ovid provided a list of known edible aphrodisiacs and then wrote: "Prescribe no more my muse, nor medicines give, Beauty and youth need no provocative."

Although I can't guarantee that ingesting these foods will lead to an amorous night, crafting a sensual meal that includes these ingredients is a perfect way to set the mood for a romantic evening. I also recommend eating with your hands or better yet, feeding each other. I learned this during my travels through India where I was told that eating with a fork and knife is like making love through a translator.

It must be noted that although there is much written on the subject, the Food and Drug Administration has determined that there is no substantiating evidence to support the validity and/or reliability of aphrodisiacs. Fact or folklore, people will follow their heart's desire in search of the perfect catalyst for love, and the answers could be just a supermarket away.

Here are a few categories to get your exploration started:

TURN UP THE HEAT

According to the second century Roman physician Galen, foods that create warmth and moisture and even have the ability to make you "windy" increase your heart rate and are thought to heat up passion. Examples include chili peppers, garlic, and ginger.

IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

Foods that resemble male or female genitalia are believed to increase desire. The infamous oyster is one example, as are some fruits and vegetables, like asparagus and carrot, which are quite phallic in shape.


YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

Reproductive organs, eggs, and bulbs are thought to increase sexual desire and potency. Eggs signify new life and fertility. Throughout history testicles and penises from all animals have been consumed to enhance the libido. Bulbs are considered to have sexual powers stemming from their ability to grow and produce.

EXOTIC AND EROTIC

Rare foods that are often expensive elicit excitement. Truffles, saffron, and roses are all pricey and evocative in creating love potions. In *Erotic Cuisine: A Natural History of Aphrodisiac Cookery*, Indian Ayurvedic medicine purports that pearl and gold dust used alongside potent foods like saffron, milk, and ghee strengthen semen power.

STIMULATING ALL THE SENSES

Foods that stimulate the senses in a pleasurable way are also thought to stimulate passion. Honey, dubbed the food of the gods, is a sweet elixir produced by bees that harvest pollen from the inner depths of flowers. This pollination process gives us another old adage involving the birds and the bees. 

Full recipes for Emily's tantalizing dinner can be found online at EdibleCleveland.com. Here's the first one to get you started:

LOVE IN BLOOM

Recipe courtesy of Emily Ellyn

Included aphrodisiacs: alcohol, vanilla, cream, rose

Makes 2 drinks

Rose sugar rystal (or substitute pink rimming sugar)

3 ounces vanilla vodka

1 ounce heavy cream

4 ounces MU Creamy Coco Cappuccino

Whipped cream

Candied rose or rose petal

For rose infused simple syrup:

2 tablespoons rose water

2 tablespoons sugar

¼ teaspoon hot pink food dye

To make rose infused simple syrup, boil the rose water, sugar, and pink food dye for 1 minute in a small saucepot. Place in refrigerator to cool. Once cool, divide the simple syrup in half. Place one half in a sterile perfume atomizer and use the other half to rim your martini glasses with rose syrup and then dip in rimming sugar.

Fill a cocktail shaker with 10 ice cubes. Add vodka, cream, MU Creamy Coco Cappuccino, and shake vigorously until shaker is frosty and cold. Strain into the glasses and garnish with whipped cream, a spritz of the simple syrup, and top with a candied rose petal.

Cheers!



FORBIDDEN FRUITS

Top 10 fruits that may do more than make your tongue tingle.

APPLES: Apples—and pears for that matter—with their curvaceous shapes have been considered erotic edibles throughout history. Apples were the original “forbidden fruit” from the Garden of Eden.

BANANAS: In addition to the phallic shape of this fruit, the banana flower also resembles a phallus. Bananas are rich in potassium and B vitamins, which are essential in sex hormone production.

DURIAN: Famous for its strong unpleasant smell, durian is nonetheless popular throughout Asian cultures because of its creamy texture and flavor. Eating the fruit is thought to promote estrogen and increase fertility.

FIGS: Figs stake claim to being one of the most potent aphrodisiacs because their velvety pink shape resemble female sex organs. The fig is also loaded with seeds (over 100 in each piece of fruit), thus supporting a claim to containing “seeds of fertility.” And let’s not forget that the fig leaf was all that covered Adam and Eve.

GOJI BERRY: This exotic berry used in Chinese medicine for thousands of years claims to increase male fertility. The polysaccharides inside of the berries have been scientifically proven to protect sperm cells and increase circulation.

PAPAYA: This fruit is packed with seeds, resembles reproductive organs, and is loaded with estrogenic compounds (female hormones). It has been used as a remedy in promoting menstruation and milk production, facilitating childbirth, and increasing the female libido.

PEACHES: The seductive shape of this fuzzy fruit mirrors the feminine physique. Succulent and sweet, peaches are packed with potassium, phosphorous, iron, and vitamins A and C. This combination is sure to boost performance.

POMEGRANATES: It’s been said this red fruit holds the “seeds of fertility” and some claim it is actually the forbidden fruit referred to in the Bible. Move over, apple! Even though Aphrodite is credited with planting the first pomegranate tree, it is also considered the wicked fruit of the underworld.

TOMATOES: Many food experts call the tomato the “apple of love” for a couple of reasons. First, the sensation of eating fresh, fully ripened, juicy tomatoes is erotic on its own. Second, tomatoes are said to aid in sexual performance because they calm nerves and improve muscle control, two handy romance enhancers.

WATERMELONS: Not usually thought of as an aphrodisiac, this juicy fruit contains citrulline, stimulating healthy blood flow like a natural Viagra. Watermelon pickles, here we come!

