Valentine’s Day Family Dinner

Even if you have reservations at a restaurant on February 14, you can still have a Valentine’s-themed family dinner sometime that week! Here are some tips for a fun, love-filled dinner:

**Fancy It Up:** This is a great opportunity to make a meal feel special with extra flourishes, like a tablecloth and candles. In a nod to candy hearts, have family members write thoughtful sayings on colorful paper hearts and decorate the table with them. You could even play everyone’s favorite love songs during dinner.

**Dress in Style:** Suggest that your family members come to dinner wearing something red, or even have them draw hearts on their faces (this works well for younger kids!).

**Cook Red Food:** Ask your family to help you cook a red meal. The menu could include cranberry juice mixed with fizzy water, Tuscan bread soup (recipe below) and heart-shaped pizza. For dessert, the kids could bake velvet cupcakes or sugar cookies.

**Share Stories:** What was your most embarrassing date? How did you meet an important person in your life? Sharing stories about romantic ups and downs can generate laughs and a sense of family history.

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**Tuscan Bread Soup**

**Ingredients:**
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- 1 can diced tomatoes
- 1 can cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 tsp dried basil
- Salt and pepper
- Fresh basil leaves

**Instructions:**
1. Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add onion and garlic and sauté until soft.
2. Add vegetable broth, diced tomatoes, beans, basil, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil.
3. Reduce heat and simmer for 20 minutes.
4. Serve hot, garnished with fresh basil leaves.

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www.thefamilydinnerproject.org
It’s February: the month of love and valentines and, depending on where you live, possibly very chilly temperatures. Some places have experienced record-breaking cold this winter. So when we were brainstorming the theme for this month’s newsletter, we thought what better topic to focus on than warmth.

These five simple ideas and activities were chosen not only for their temperature-raising potential, but also for their ability to promote warmth and connection among you and your loved ones.

**Bake Together:**
The more the merrier when it comes to baking. Even very young children can help out by measuring, pouring and stirring ingredients. Try a new recipe or an old favorite. To spread the warmth even further, invite friends and/or other family members to join in for a Bake-Off. Choose one food item that everyone makes and then throw a party where you share the finished products. Everyone gets to taste and vote on the best recipe, and maybe the winner gets a prize? This is also a great idea for older kids who like to cook to do with friends.

**Build A Blanket Fort:**
Who doesn’t love a blanket fort? (And anything with blanket in the title is sure to promote warmth). You can wing it on your own with a few chairs, blankets and pillows. For optimal warmth and connection, be sure to grab flashlights and get in the fort with your kids.

**Warm Drink and A Game:**
Nothing’s better on a chilly evening than holding a mug of something warm and sweet in your hands. To make it more fun, get the kids in the kitchen to help you make homemade hot chocolate (with homemade whipped cream to go with it) or mulled hot cider. As for games, there are plenty to choose from, although if it’s really cold, we recommend Charades to keep you moving and raise your body temperature!

**Snuggle In Bed:**
Everybody in! Make it a point on a Saturday or Sunday morning to all squeeze into bed together. Nothing’s better than body heat for warmth, and silliness is sure to follow. If you already have a family tradition of snuggling together on the weekend, add an extra five or ten minutes to that time this month, in honor of Valentine’s Day (and the Polar Vortex).

**Create Your Own Summer In Winter:**
How about a luau in the living room this month featuring Hawaiian Chicken? Or you can have an indoor barbecue and invite the neighbors (who it seems like you never see any more because it’s too cold to leave the house) over to join you. Make it a potluck, perhaps. The more company, the more warmth all around.

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**Conversation:**

That’s Amore! The conversation starters this month are all around the theme of what else? Love!

**Ages 2-7**
- Name five people you love most in the world, and why (animals are OK too).
- There’s a song that goes: “when the moon hits your eye like a big pizza pie, that’s amore…” What other foods does the moon look like?
- What makes you feel loved?

**Ages 8-13**
- Do you find it easy to say “I love you,” or hard? Are there times when it’s harder than others?
- Who or what exemplifies the meaning of “love” to you?
- Do you have a favorite love story? Is it from a book, movie or real life? Talk about it.

**Ages 14-100**
- One of the Beatles’ most famous songs is “All You Need is Love.” Do you think that’s true? What other necessities might you throw in there?
- Who was the first person you fell in love with? (or “Talk about your first love.”)
- What one lesson about love would you share with those younger than you?

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**Fun:**

**Cards to Show You Care**

Before dinner or during dessert, have your family make Valentine’s Day cards out of construction paper. They could be for other family members or for someone who might not usually receive a card on Valentine’s Day (like an older neighbor who lives alone, residents in a nursing home, kids or adults in the hospital). Placing an unexpected Valentine in someone’s mailbox can brighten up their whole day!

**Valentine’s Day Candy Hearts Game**

Pour the bag of candy hearts in a bowl. Go around the table and have each person draw a candy heart and follow the instructions for the color they chose:
- Pink = Name one reason why you love each person at the table.
- Purple = Choose one positive word to describe the person to your right.
- Green = Choose one positive word to describe the person to your left.
- Yellow = Hug the person to your right.
- Red = Hug the person to your left.
- White = Make up and sing a silly love song about your family.

[www.thefamilydinnerproject.org](http://www.thefamilydinnerproject.org)
**Recipe of the Month**

**Tuscan Bread Soup**

1 Onion, chopped  
2 Cloves garlic, minced  
1 Fennel bulb, chopped  
2 c. Crusty bread, cut into 1 inch cubes  
1 12oz can chopped tomatoes  
3 c Chicken or vegetable stock  
¼ c Red wine or balsamic vinegar  
½ c Chopped fresh basil  
½ c Parmesan, shredded

Soak the bread in cold water. Sauté onion and fennel in 1 tbls of olive oil in a large pot for about 5 minutes. Add minced garlic. After about 1 minute add tomatoes, stock and wine/vinegar. Tightly squeeze out the bread and add to pot. Let cook 40 minutes. Add basil and Parmesan and cook another few minutes. Serve hot with extra shredded parmesan on top.

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**February Birthdays**

Feb 1 – Elia Barocio  
Feb 7 – Rita Calderon  
Feb 18 – Chris Ortiz  
Feb 26 – Josie Lozano

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**February**

American Heart Month  
[newsroom.heart.org](http://newsroom.heart.org)  

National Children’s Dental Health Month  
[www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org)  

Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month  
[www.teendvmonth.org](http://www.teendvmonth.org)  

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**Run/Walk Events**

Fresno Valentine Run  
Feb 11 ~ Woodward Park  
[http://fresnovalentinerrun.com](http://fresnovalentinerrun.com)  

Chocolate Run  
Feb 17 ~ Woodward Park  
[https://runsignup.com/Race/CA/Fresno/ChocolateRun](https://runsignup.com/Race/CA/Fresno/ChocolateRun)  

Reedley College to Parkway Run  
Feb 24 ~ Reedley College  
[https://runsignup.com/Race/CA/Reedley/college2parkway](https://runsignup.com/Race/CA/Reedley/college2parkway)  

Blossom Trail 10K  
March 3 ~ Sanger  
[https://runsignup.com/Race/CA/Sanger/SangerBlossomTrain10kRun](https://runsignup.com/Race/CA/Sanger/SangerBlossomTrain10kRun)  

St. Patrick’s Day Run  
March 17 ~ Woodward Park  
[https://runsignup.com/Race/CA/Fresno/StPaddysDayRun](https://runsignup.com/Race/CA/Fresno/StPaddysDayRun)  

Fresno Donut Run  
March 25 ~ Woodward Park  

California Classic half Marathon  
April 7 ~ Chuckchansi Park  
[www.californiaclassicweekend.com](http://www.californiaclassicweekend.com)  

Mud Factor – Fresno  
April 7 ~ Hobb’s Grove  