

Tricks of the Trade *February!*

It's that time of year to snuggle up with your loved ones and remind them how much they mean to you. We've pulled together some easy and practical Valentine's Day cards to make for friends, along with Valentine-themed activities to do around you home. So have fun, give your little one a hug and enjoy!

Crafts

Recycled Crayon Heart Valentines (Family Fun)

Materials: Old, broken crayons; Heart-shaped cookie or muffin pan (The silicone type works best); Scrap paper; Double-sided foam mounting tape; Scissors; Colored card stock; Marker; Cooking spray

Instructions

1. Heat the oven to 250°.
2. Spray inside of pan. Fill each mold with crayon pieces and bake until the crayons melt, about 10 to 15 minutes. **Tip:** Place a sheet pan under the crayons to catch any drips.
3. Once they're cool, remove the hearts from the molds and smooth any rough edges by rubbing them on a piece of scrap paper.
4. Use small pieces of foam tape to stick each heart to a 3-inch circle cut from card stock -- or use our template (www.familyfun.go.com/assets/cms/pdf/crafts/1206_crayonhearts.pdf) then add your message.

Suggested messages: You color my world, Valentine, You make my heart melt, Have a happy Valentine's Day, for "crayon" out loud!

Super Easy & Simple Pencil Valentines (Family fun)

Materials: Card stock; Pencils; Double-sided tape; Marker

Instructions

Cut a 4 3/4- by 1 1/2-inch strip of card stock, roll one end around the top of a pencil, and secure it with double-sided tape. Draw on hearts or tape on card stock ones, then write your message with marker.

Suggested Messages: Write on, Valentine!, You're all write!, You're so sharp!

Heart Tree

Instructions

Find a branch outside that has several smaller branches coming off of it and place the branch standing up in a pot of soil. Place material in pot to hold branch such as sand, soil or even rice. You can also paint the branch and container, or simply leave as it is!

Create heart ornaments to hang:

Cut out an assortment of hearts from different colored cardstock or construction paper and string each one with ribbon. Decorate. Family

members can write the people, pets, things that they love on the hearts, and hang them on the tree. Using clay, shape into hearts. Using a straw, push a hole in clay to thread a ribbon. Once the heart is dry, paint and decorate. String beads on pipe cleaners, shape into a heart.

Games



Heart Seek and Find

Cut up hearts and scatter them around the house. Have older ones? Write sight words on the back, or make a word scrabble by writing a letter on each heart to create a word.

Heart Hop & Stomp

Tape or place those hearts on the floor for a trail for little ones to jump, hop and stomp on!

Quick Boredom Busters

Make Valentines day card for friends, family members and teachers! Use anything you can find: photographs, scraps of paper, glitter, markers and stickers are a favorite!

Make a heart garland. Cut out paper heart shapes and tape together to make a garland for your mantel, window or staircase.



Gibbles and Nibbles

Valentine's Layered Jell-O Cut Outs. (Family Fun)

Ingredients: 1 (14-ounce) can of sweetened condensed milk
3 (3-ounce) packages of red flavored gelatin
2 (1/4-ounce) envelopes of unflavored gelatin

Directions: Dissolve one package of flavored gelatin in 3/4 cup boiling water. Add 3/4 cup cold water, then pour the mixture into a 9- by 13-inch glass pan and refrigerate for 1 hour. Stir together 1/2 cup boiling water and the condensed milk. In a separate bowl, dissolve the unflavored gelatin in 1/2 cup cold water for 1 to 2 minutes. Thoroughly mix in 3/4 cup boiling water, then combine this mixture with the milk and let it cool. Add half the mixture to the pan of red gelatin, pouring it over a spatula to slow the stream, and refrigerate for 20 minutes. Continue alternating layers — gelatin mix, the remaining milk mix, the final gelatin mix — chilling each for 20 to 30 minutes to set it. Create individual servings with a heart-shaped cookie cutter.

Chocolate Fondue: (Martha Stewart)

Ingredients: 1 pound bittersweet chocolate, coarsely chopped; 2 cups heavy cream; accompaniments: pineapple; strawberries; apple slices; pound cake; rice crispies; marshmallows, etc.

Directions: Combine chocolate and cream in a heat-proof bowl set over a pan of barely simmering water. Using a wooden spoon, stir occasionally until chocolate is melted and mixture is smooth. Divide among 8 bowls. Serve immediately with accompaniments.

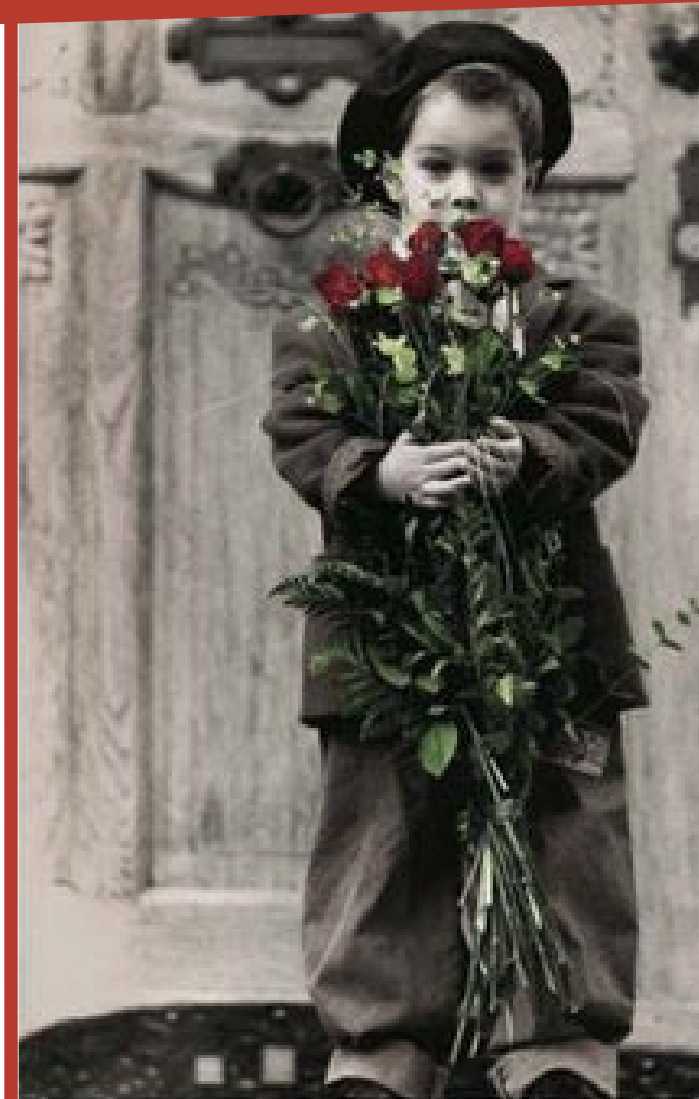
Heart Shape Food Fun:

Want to make Valentines even more fun? Here are some dishes you can incorporate the all time-favorite shape of the season:

Pancakes: Pour into the shape, or use a cookie cutter.

Heart Shaped Pizza: Shape into a heart, add your toppings and bake.

Sandwiches, cheese, fruit slices, cookies, brownies, rice crispie treats: Just use your cookie cutter!



Kim Anderson

Books to Read



The Biggest Valentine Ever

Steven Kroll

I Love You More Than Rainbows

Susan Crites

The Story of Valentine's Day

Nancy Skarmear