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Almond French Toast Hearts

Ingredients

- 6 slices bread
- 2 eggs
- ¼ cup milk
- 1½ teaspoons almond extract, divided
- 2 tablespoons plus 1 cup butter, divided
- 3 tablespoons confectioners' sugar
- additional confectioners' sugar and fresh strawberries



Directions:

1. Cut out bread slices with a 3¼ inch heart-shaped cookie cutter and discard the trimmings.
2. In a shallow bowl, combine the eggs, milk and ½ teaspoon almond extract. Dip bread on both sides in egg mixture. In a large skillet, melt 2 tablespoons butter. Cook bread hearts for 2-3 minutes on each side or until golden brown.
3. For almond butter, in a small bowl, combine confectioners' sugar and remaining butter and extract; mix well. Sprinkle French toast with additional confectioners' sugar. Serve with almond butter and strawberries. **Yield:** 3 servings.

Source: www.tasteofhome.com

Six Things You Didn't Know About Chocolate

It was a "classy" drink. Cacao beans were used by the Aztecs to prepare a hot, frothy beverage with stimulant and restorative properties. Chocolate was reserved for warriors, nobility, and priests.



It makes you happy. We know what you're thinking: "Of course chocolate makes you happy - it's so good!" But there's scientific evidence to back up those light-hearted feelings. Like other palatable sweet foods, consumption of chocolate triggers the release of endorphins, the body's endogenous opiates. Enhanced endorphin-release reduces the chocolate-eater's sensitivity to pain and contributes to the warm inner glow induced in susceptible chocoholics.

It'll help you live longer. Two of the world's longest-living people - Jeanne Calment (122 years old) and Sarah Knauss (119 years old) - were considered chocoholics by today's standards. In fact, Calment habitually ate two pounds of chocolate per week before her doctor instructed her to give up sweets.

Chocolate is complex. More than 300 different constituent compounds in chocolate have been identified.

Eating large amounts may give you an energy boost. Chocolate contains caffeine, but the caffeine is present only in modest quantities. It is easily obtained from other sources. Indeed a whole ounce of milk chocolate contains no more caffeine than a typical cup of "decaffeinated" coffee.

It decreases stress. Chocolate also contains tryptophan. Tryptophan is an essential amino acid. It is the rate-limiting step in the production of the mood-modulating neurotransmitter serotonin. Enhanced serotonin function typically diminishes anxiety.

Source: www.chocolate.org



7 Easy Ways to Improve Your Home on a Budget

Does your home deserve a little TLC, but the idea of an “extreme home makeover” makes you want to cringe? Don’t fret over a few fixer-uppers. Here are seven DIY projects that will spiff up those sore spots without breaking the bank.

Create an Accent Wall: Go from blah to beautiful with just a can of paint or some wallpaper. An accent wall adds instant depth to a room that might otherwise appear flat.

Paint the Garage Door: When it comes to around-the-house DIY projects, painting a garage door may not immediately come to mind. But easy updates like this make a big impression in the eyes of buyers - and your neighbors.

Add a Splash of Color to your Front Door: You’ve heard the saying “first impressions are the most important.” The same is true for your home. Color doesn’t work on every home, but for some it can add an

instant “pop” that immediately adds character and personality. Just choose your palette wisely.

“Green” Your Home: There are many benefits to bringing plant life into your home. Not only do they purify your air, they add instant “life” to any room. Find easy-to-maintain plants that don’t dry out easily in an air-conditioned environment.

Fix the Floors: Floors reveal a lot about the condition of your home. If they need to be replaced, bite the bullet and just do it, but if they aren’t in too bad of a condition, a quick sand and stain on a hardwood floor or carpet cleaning can bring back that “new home” feeling in days.

Accessorize: Your home is a reflection of YOU - take the time to add home decor that speaks to your own personal style. Buying accessories doesn’t have to be expensive. Look for stores with products on sale or estate sales in your area. Consignment and wholesale stores are also popular places to find great value on a wide variety of home decor.

Clear out the Clutter: Nothing makes a home feel like new more than organizing all that stuff you’ve amassed over time. Take a weekend (or two, depending on how much you’ve let it pile up) to clean out the garage, closets, drawers, extra bedrooms, and attic. You’ll be amazed at how it “frees” you and your home. Make this the great clean-out of 2013.

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Our granddaughter,
Clara Grace, 5 months.