

# FEBRUARY

# 2015



Lori Czaya

## HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY

### The Story of Chocolate

Chocolate grows on trees - *Theobroma Cacao*, which means "Food of the Gods" in Greek.

The cocoa "beans" that form the basis of chocolate are actually seeds from the fruit of the cacao tree, which grows near the Equator. The seeds grow inside a pod-like fruit and are covered with white pulp.



After fermentation, the beans are dried, cleaned, and roasted.

Although cocoa originated in the Americas, today Western Africa produces almost two-thirds of the world's cocoa.


### Valentine's Day Decorating

February 14<sup>th</sup> is Valentine's day, a holiday where people traditionally show love for one another. What a beautiful thought!

Romance your home with some fresh flowers such as roses or hydrangeas. A beautiful vintage arrangement can create the mood. Here are some other simple things you can do to show Valentine's day in your home. A little red ribbon, paper, and lace can go very far on Valentine's Day. Decorate some plain glass jars or vases you have in your kitchen.

### Valentine's Day History

The history of Valentine's Day is obscure, and further clouded by various fanciful legends. The holiday's roots are in the ancient Roman festival of *Lupercalia*, a fertility celebration commemorated annually on February 15. Pope *Gelasius I* recast this pagan festival as a Christian feast day circa 496, declaring February 14 to be St. Valentine's Day.

There were at least three early Christian saints by the name  *Valentine* or *Valentinus*. It is said that all three were martyred on February 14<sup>th</sup>. Fact or Fiction? You have to decide for yourself.

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### Seared Scallops and Fettuccine

#### Ingredients

- 1 bunch of kale, stems removed
- 1 lb. fettuccine or linguini
- 1 lb. sea scallops
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 2 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 yellow onion, chopped
- 4 cloves of garlic, chopped
- Zest of half a lemon
- Red pepper flakes
- Kosher salt
- Ground black pepper
- Grated Parmesan cheese



#### Directions

Slice the kale leaves thinly and set aside. Put up a pot of salted water and bring to a boil. Cook the pasta until tender. Dry the sea scallops with paper towels. Season with salt and pepper. In a large skillet, heat the olive oil and butter on high heat. Once it begins to smoke, add the scallops and cook for approximately 3 minutes, until it has browned on one side. Using tongs, flip the scallops and cook for an additional 1 to 2 minutes, depending on size, then set aside. In the same skillet, cook the onions for 1 to 2 minutes. Add the kale and garlic cloves, season with salt and ground black pepper and cook for another 4 minutes. Now add in the pasta and kale mixture. Mix in the parsley, lemon zest and season with salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes. Serve with the scallops on top, with grated parmesan cheese to taste.

Recipe and photo from: [A Thought For Food.net](http://AThoughtForFood.net)

# Love Your Spouse & Your House!

- When couples disagree on buying a home

She adores the kitchen; he hates the back yard. Or he loves the proximity to work but she thinks they need an extra bedroom. Agreeing on a house can potentially be a relationship test for some couples.

Compromising, keeping a level head, and being objective are key for house-hunting couples. If you and your spouse find yourself searching for a house in a tight sellers' market, then agreeing on a house will likely be even tougher than under normal conditions.

Some things to keep in mind to help you evaluate each house you and your spouse are considering:

**The Neighborhood.** Remember that you're not just buying a house, but you're deciding on a neighborhood and a way of life. If you have kids and being close to a neighborhood school and park is important, you'll want to consider that. How close are shopping, restaurants, churches, and other services? Are the streets maintained? Are homes maintained well? How long will your commute to work be?

**The House Compared To Others In The Neighborhood.** It might be enticing to have the biggest house on the block, but real estate experts say it's best to have a smaller or mid-sized house (compared to others in the neighborhood). The value of the biggest houses will be bogged down by the lowered value of the smaller ones.

**The Layout Of The House.** Before you start looking at houses, determine how many bedrooms and special spaces -- home office, playroom, hobby room, etc. -- you need. If the houses at which you are looking don't meet these physical needs, they should be eliminated from consideration, even if you fall in love with the kitchen.

**The Potential.** If you or your spouse is put off by the blue carpet, purple walls or vinyl flooring in the kitchen, think about how you can eventually improve and change with new flooring and paint. Look at the major structural elements and layout of the house. Always keep in mind that cosmetic aspects can be changed.

**Your Budget.** The amount you plan on spending on down payment, closing costs and your monthly mortgage should be determined before you start looking at houses. Once those figures are established, your real estate agent will be able to help you determine the price range of houses you should be looking at. If you or your partner eyes a house outside the budget, you should discount it unless you both agree you can afford more than you originally agreed.

Source: [move.realtor.com](http://move.realtor.com) by Michelle Dawson



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