

Valentine's Day is just around the corner. Time to start thinking about making that special someone in your life a tasty treat. Whether it is just a dessert or the whole meal, breakfast, or dinner, making a special dish is a great way to show love.

Let us know if there is something you would like us to put in our column, or if you have a recipe to share, please submit to [ads@thedrummer.com](mailto:ads@thedrummer.com).

## Apple Pomegranate Spritzers

*Total Time: 5 minutes*

*Yield: 10-12 servings*

6 c. sparkling water, chilled  
3 c. apple juice, chilled  
3 c. pomegranate juice, chilled  
3 c. lemon-lime flavored soda, chilled (or use sweet white wine for an alcoholic version)  
apple and orange slices to garnish  
fresh mint (optional garnish)

In a large pitcher, combine water, juices, and soda, stir to combine. Garnish with fruit slices.  
Serve immediately over ice.

## Red Velvet Milkshakes

*Servings: 2 milkshakes*

*(or 6 minis)*

1 c. vanilla ice cream  
3 T. red velvet cake mix  
1 tsp. vanilla extract  
1/2 c. milk

Blend all ingredients together until smooth. Add more, or less, red velvet cake mix to liking (will alter color and flavor). Also try cake batter flavored ice cream for a more "cake-like" flavor!

**Optional:** Serve in a pretty glass, top with whipped cream from spray can, sprinkle with Valentine's Day sprinkles, and insert decorative straw.

## Microwave Egg Caprese Breakfast Cups

2 slices thinly sliced ham  
Shredded mozzarella or provolone or a mix of the two  
2 eggs

### **Basil pesto sauce:**

Cherry tomatoes cut in half  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
Fresh basil leaves, if desired

Layer the slices of ham on the bottom and up the sides of a ramekin or small bowl pressing into the creases and ruffling the edges then sprinkle with the cheese.

Crack the eggs into the ramekins and add a dollop of pesto over the eggs with a few cherry tomato halves and season with kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Place in the microwave and cover with a microwave plate cover and cook on high for 1 minute and 30 seconds or until the whites are set, adding additional 20 second bursts if needed. All microwaves will cook differently so play around with the amount of time. If cooking more than one set of eggs at a time, allow for more cooking time as well. Garnish with fresh basil leaves and more kosher salt and black pepper if desired.

## Baked French Toast

*Yields: 8 servings*

*Prep Time: 15 mins*

*Cook Time: 1 hour 0 mins*

*Total Time: 1 hour 15 mins*

### **For the French Toast:**

Butter, for greasing  
1 loaf crusty sourdough or French bread  
8 whole eggs  
2 c. whole milk  
1/2 c. heavy cream  
1/2 c. sugar  
1/2 c. brown sugar  
2 T. vanilla extract

### **For the Topping:**

1/2 c. flour

1/2 c. firmly packed brown sugar  
1 tsp. cinnamon  
1/4 tsp. salt  
Freshly grated nutmeg (opt.)  
1 stick cold butter, cut into pieces  
Warm syrup, for serving  
Butter, for serving  
1 c. fresh blueberries, for serving

**For the French toast:** Grease the baking pan with butter. Tear the bread into chunks, or cut into cubes, and evenly distribute in the pan. Crack the eggs in a big bowl. Whisk together the eggs, milk, cream, granulated sugar, brown sugar, and vanilla. Pour evenly over the bread. Cover the pan tightly and store in the fridge until needed (overnight preferably). Or you can make it and bake it right away.

**For the topping:** Mix the flour, brown sugar, cinnamon, salt, and some nutmeg in a separate bowl. Stir together using a fork. Add the butter and use a pastry cutter to mix it all together until the mixture resembles fine pebbles. Store in a plastic bag in the fridge.

When ready to bake the casserole, preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Remove the casserole from the fridge and sprinkle the topping over the top. Bake for 45 minutes for a softer, more bread pudding texture or for 1 hour-plus or more for a firmer, crisper texture.

Scoop out individual portions. Top with butter, drizzle with warm pancake syrup, and sprinkle with blueberries.

## Lobster Risotto

*Total Time: 30 mins*

3 c. bottled clam juice  
3 c. water  
2 T. olive oil  
1 c. finely chopped yellow onion  
1/2 c. cubed (1/8-inch pieces) carrot  
1/2 c. cubed (1/8-inch pieces) celery  
1-1/2 c. uncooked Arborio rice  
Pinch of best-quality saffron threads  
1/2 c. (4 ounce) dry white wine  
1-pound cooked lobster meat (about 3 cups)  
1 t tsp. kosher salt  
1/4 tsp. black pepper  
3 oz. Parmesan cheese, grated (about 3/4 cup)  
Sliced fresh chives, for garnish

Cook clam juice and 3 cups water in a medium saucepan over medium-low, undisturbed, until steaming, about 10 minutes. Reduce heat to medium-low and keep warm.

Meanwhile, heat oil in a large saucepan over medium-high. Add onion, carrot, and celery; cook, stirring often, until slightly softened, about 5 minutes. Add rice and saffron; cook, stirring constantly, until rice is toasted, about 1 minute. Add wine; cook, stirring often, until almost absorbed, 30 seconds to 1 minute. Reduce heat to medium.

Add 1 cup hot clam juice mixture to rice mixture; cook, stirring often, until almost absorbed, 2 to 3 minutes. Continue adding clam juice mixture, 1/2 cup at a time, stirring until clam juice mixture is almost absorbed after each addition, until rice is al dente and mixture is creamy, 15 to 20 minutes.

Remove rice mixture from heat; gently stir in lobster, salt, and pepper. Gradually stir in Parmesan. Stir in additional clam juice mixture, a splash at a time, to loosen risotto, if needed. Discard remaining clam juice mixture. Divide risotto evenly among 4 bowls; garnish with chives.

## Red Wine Braised Short Ribs

*Yields: 8-10 servings*

*Prep Time: 1 hour*

*Total Time: 1 day 5 hrs*

6 lb. bone-in beef short ribs  
Kosher salt  
1 T. olive oil  
2 onions, halved through the roots, skins discarded  
2 heads garlic cloves, peeled and smashed  
1 (4.5-oz.) tube double- concentrated tomato paste  
1 (750-ml) bottle red wine  
4 sprigs thyme  
1/2 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes

Heat broiler to high with the rack set about 5 inches from the top. Arrange ribs in a single layer on a rimmed baking sheet and season with salt. Broil, turning once, until deeply browned and crisped, 15 to 20 minutes. Set aside. Switch oven to 300°F.

Meanwhile, in a large Dutch oven or pot, heat oil over medium-high. Add onion halves, cut sides down, and garlic. Cook, until lightly browned and fragrant, 2 to 3 minutes. Add tomato paste and stir to coat. Increase heat to high, and add wine, thyme, and red pepper flakes. Bring to a boil then reduce to a simmer until the steam coming off the pot no longer smells super-boozy, and the wine has reduced slightly, 8 to 10 minutes.

Add short ribs (discard any fat on the sheet pan), and cover with enough water to submerge the ribs (5 to 6 cups). Bring to a boil, then transfer to the oven. Cook until beef is super-tender, 2 hours to 2 hours 30 minutes. Cool to room temperature, then chill overnight. (This overnight rest is essential to deepening the flavor and improving the texture of the meat.)

An hour or two before serving, scrape the congealed fat off the top and discard. Cook over medium-low heat just until the liquid is no longer congealed. Use a slotted spoon to scoop out the meat and transfer to a large bowl or sheet pan. Discard thyme and onion. Simmer braising liquid over medium-high heat until thickened and reduced slightly, 10 to 15 minutes. Once cool enough to touch, use your hands to pull meat off bones; discard bones and any cartilage. (Be careful not to shred the meat too much—you want it to be in nice, juicy chunks.)

Remove pot from heat. Add meat and gently stir to combine. Serve warm.

## Creamy Chicken and Pasta

*Total Time: 30 min*

*Yields: 5 servings*

2 c. uncooked penne pasta  
2 c. sliced fresh mushrooms  
1 c. sliced green onions  
2 T. butter  
1/2 c. white wine or chicken broth  
1 tsp. minced garlic  
1 T. all-purpose flour  
1/3 c. water  
1 c. heavy whipping cream  
2 c. cubed cooked chicken  
2 T. capers, drained  
1/4 tsp. salt  
1/8 tsp. pepper  
Shredded Parmesan cheese

Cook pasta according to package directions. Meanwhile, in a large skillet, sauté mushrooms and onions in butter for 4-5 minutes or until tender. Add wine or broth and garlic. Bring to a boil; cook until liquid is reduced by half, about 5 minutes.

Combine flour and water until smooth; gradually add to mushroom mixture. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Stir in cream. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, for 4-5 minutes or until heated through.

Drain pasta. Add the pasta, chicken, capers, salt and pepper to cream sauce. Cook for 3-4 minutes or until heated through. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.

## White Chocolate-Strawberry Snack Mix

*Level: Easy*

*Total: 25 min*

*Active: 25 min*

*Yield: 16 to 18 servings (about 10 cups)*

1 (1.2-oz.) bag freeze-dried strawberries (about 1-1/2 c.)  
1 c. confectioners' sugar  
5 c. crisp rice cereal squares, such as Rice Chex®  
4 c. honey whole-grain oat cereal, such as Honey Nut Cheerios®  
3 (4-oz.) bars white chocolate, chopped  
1 c. pink candy-coated chocolates  
1/4 c. red and white sprinkles, such as Jumbo Hearts and sprinkles

Pulse the freeze-dried strawberries in a food processor until very finely ground and powdered in texture. Alternatively, place in a resealable bag and crush with your hands or a rolling pin until very finely and evenly ground and powdered in texture. Transfer to a small bowl and whisk in the confectioners' sugar until combined. Set aside.

Pour the crisp rice cereal squares and honey whole-grain oat cereal into a large bowl. Put the chopped white chocolate in a medium microwave safe bowl. Microwave at 50% power in 15-second intervals, stirring occasionally, until just melted and smooth, about 1 minute. Pour the melted chocolate over the cereal mixture, then gently toss with a rubber spatula until evenly coated. Pour the strawberry-sugar mixture over the chocolate-coated cereal, then toss again until every piece is nicely coated and pink. Stir in the candy-coated chocolate and sprinkles. Store in an airtight container for up to 5 days.

## Chocolate Raspberry-Mousse Candy Cake

*Level: Intermediate*

*Total: 5 hr 15 min*

*(includes cooling time)*

*Active: 35 min*

*Yield: 10 to 12 servings*

### Chocolate Cake:

1 stick (8 T.) unsalted butter, melted and slightly cooled, plus more for pan  
1 c. all-purpose flour (see Cook's Note), plus more for pan

1 c. sugar  
1/2 c. Dutch-process cocoa powder  
1 tsp. baking soda  
1/2 tsp. baking powder  
1/2 tsp. kosher salt  
1/2 c. buttermilk, room temp.  
1 large egg, room temp.  
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract

**Raspberry Mousse:**

1-1/4 c. (about 5 oz.) frozen raspberries, thawed  
1 c. sugar  
1/2 tsp. kosher salt  
1 (1/4-oz.) packet unflavored powdered gelatin  
4 oz. cream cheese, room temp.  
1/2 c. sour cream, room temp.

**White Chocolate Ganache:**

1 lb. (16 oz.) white chocolate, finely chopped or white chocolate chips  
1/2 c. heavy cream

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Butter two 8-inch round cake pans, line the bottoms with parchment paper, butter the parchment and dust with flour, tapping out excess.

Whisk the flour, sugar, cocoa powder, baking soda, baking powder and salt together in a large bowl. Whisk the melted butter, buttermilk, egg, vanilla and 1/2 cup water together in another bowl until smooth. Add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients, whisking until just combined. Divide the batter between the prepared cake pans, smoothing the tops. Bake, rotating the pans halfway through cooking, until a toothpick inserted in the center of each cake comes out clean, about 25 minutes.

Transfer the cakes to a rack and let cool 15 minutes. Invert the cakes on the rack, discard the parchment paper then flip the cakes right-side-up again. Move the rack with the cakes over a baking sheet and let the cakes cool completely.

**Make the raspberry mousse:** In a small saucepan, mash the raspberries with the sugar and salt and bring to a simmer over medium heat. Cook, stirring often, until thickened and jammy, 6 to 8 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat, press the raspberry mixture through a sieve into the bowl of a food processor and let cool completely.

Combine the gelatin with 1 tablespoon cold water in a small bowl and let stand for 5 minutes to soften. Heat the gelatin in the microwave until it melts completely, about 10 seconds, stirring to dissolve. Add the gelatin mixture, cream cheese and sour cream to the food processor and process until smooth. Scrape the mixture into a bowl and refrigerate, checking every 5 minutes, until the mousse is just set enough to spread, 5 to 15 minutes. (Do not let the mousse firm up too much.)

Place one cake layer on a cake stand and pile the raspberry mousse in the center, spreading it in a thick layer almost to the edge. Top with the remaining cake, aligning the layers directly on top of each other so the cake does not lean. Refrigerate the assembled cake for 1 hour.

**Meanwhile, make the chocolate ganache:** Bring the cream to a simmer in a small saucepan then remove from heat. Add the chocolate, shaking the pan gently to submerge it. Allow the pan to stand, off the heat, for 3 minutes to melt the chocolate. Whisk the ganache smooth, then refrigerate until it is just thick enough to spread (like mayonnaise), about 5 minutes. (Do not let the ganache harden too much.)

Stir the ganache again and scoop it on top of the cake, spreading it over the top and sides. Refrigerate the cake until the ganache is set, at least 2 hours or overnight.

**Cook's Note:** When measuring flour, we spoon it into a dry measuring cup and level off the excess. (Scooping directly from the bag compacts the flour, resulting in dry baked goods.)

**Quote of the Week:**

***“Look at how a single candle can both defy and define the darkness.”***

**~ Anne Frank**