

News column for use week of 2/14/2022
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River Valley District
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10 Ways to Celebrate a Heart-Healthy Month of Romance from the American Heart Association

February has long been celebrated as a month of romance. Across the United States and in other places around the world, people take time this month to celebrate love and friendship by exchanging cards, candy, flowers, and gifts. February is also American Heart Month. Coincidence? Perhaps. But Perhaps the coinciding of American Heart Month and Valentine's Day tells us one of the best gifts you can give someone you care about is to show them you care about their heart. A healthy diet and regular physical activity can be key to a healthy heart.

This Valentine's Day, indulge those you care about with a heart-healthy gift or date.

1. Rather than tempting your beloved with chocolates, consider a gift that has more permanence. Search for a poem that describes your feelings and write it on beautiful paper for a handmade Valentine.
2. Quality time is one of the most meaningful gifts. Bundle up and plan an active outing such as sledding, ice skating, gathering wood for a fire, or if you're feeling adventurous, visit an indoor rock wall.
3. If your children are having a Valentine's Day party at their school or daycare, instead of sending candies, consider mini-boxes of raisins, mini-bags of pretzels, pencils, or stickers as tokens of their friendly affection.
4. Prepare a romantic candlelit dinner at home. Heart-healthy recipes can be found at recipes.heart.org.
5. Give to one another by giving back. Ask a date to volunteer with you at a local charity. Giving back is a healthy habit that will boost your mood and beat stress.
6. Sharing is caring – if you do go out for a romantic dinner date, order one entrée to share. Many restaurant servings are enough for two – splitting will keep you from overdoing it.
7. Don't forget to love Fido, too! Give your pet a Valentine and remember to walk or exercise them daily – getting active will benefit your health and your bond with your pets.
8. Take it slow – if you were gifted a luxurious box of chocolates from your sweetie stick it in the fridge or freezer and enjoy it in moderation over several weeks.
9. Try something new – dare yourself to try a new fruit or vegetable. Next time you're at the store pick up something you've never made before. Many grocery stores have free recipe cards in the produce section or just type the food into your favorite search engine.
10. Rekindle an old flame – try preparing one of your less-favorite foods in a new way. Not crazy about bananas? Try grilling one for dessert. Pop grapes in the freezer for mini-ice pop snacks.

Any questions about heart-healthy living may be directed to the River Valley Extension District's Nutrition, Food Safety, and Health Agent, Kaitlin Moore, at 785-243-8185 or kaitlinmoore@ksu.edu.

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