

Delicious Recipes Abound for Dairy-Free and Vegan Valentines

They say that the quickest way to a person's heart is through their stomach. Therefore, it seems only logical that something edible must take center stage on Valentine's Day. Yet for many people, special occasions revolving around food can seem like a field of land mines. Dodging ingredients for food allergies, lactose intolerance, veganism or other health and social reasons can put a roadblock in front of indulgence. But thanks to a new generation of can-do recipe creators, old favorites are coming back on the radar, and Valentine's Day is certainly no exception.

Websites, blogs, and cookbooks are emerging with fervor to address this ever-growing niche. The website www.godairyfree.org updates daily with new recipes that go well beyond milk-free, and popular bloggers such as Fat Free Vegan and Bittersweet Blog entice viewers with voluptuous photographs and accompanying recipes. In addition, three sweets focused cookbooks free from dairy and eggs have hit the shelves within the past year: *My Sweet Vegan*, *Vegan Cupcakes Take Over the World*, and *The Joy of Vegan Baking*.

Hannah Kaminsky, author of the dessert cookbook *My Sweet Vegan*, insists that desserts need not be rich in dairy and eggs to please the palate, "People are amazed when they taste my creations. Some refuse to believe that they are in fact vegan." Kaminsky credits the long forgotten pantry for providing an abundance of options. Going back to the basics, she finds many delicious opportunities with sugar, oil, and flour.

To demonstrate the power of simplicity, Kaminsky's cookbook includes a recipe for luxurious Cherry Chocolate Truffles, made with just four ingredients, and no added sugars. Yet, while chocolate receive the most attention around this holiday of aphrodisiacs, Kaminsky's favorite Valentine's Day treat was intended to surprise the recipient as a breakfast-in-bed treat. Below she shares her recipe for Strawberry Love Muffins.

"While chocolate candies tend to take center stage for obvious reasons, there are endless other possibilities for equally romantic treats, especially for those who prefer something sweet that isn't such an over-the-top indulgence. Or maybe at least something delicious they can eat in addition to their truffles and bonbons."

Strawberry Love Muffins

Recipe from *My Sweet Vegan* by Hannah Kaminsky

1½ Cups All-Purpose Flour
½ Cup Granulated Sugar
1 Teaspoon Baking Powder
1 Teaspoon Baking Soda
¼ Teaspoon Salt
¾ Cup Plain Soymilk
1/3 Cup Canola or Vegetable Oil
1 Teaspoon Vanilla Extract
1 Cup Frozen Strawberries, Thawed and Sliced

Preheat your oven to 375°F (190°C) and grease one dozen muffin tins.

Begin by mixing together your dry ingredients (flour through salt) in a large bowl. Gently stir in the soymilk, oil, and vanilla but be careful not to over mix, a few lumps are okay! Fold in the thawed strawberries and pour the batter into your prepared muffin tins, ¾ of the way to the top. Slide your filled tins into the oven and bake for 15 to 20 minutes, until a toothpick inserted into the center of a muffin comes out clean. Let the muffins sit for at least 10 minutes before removing them from the pan. Enjoy with someone you love.

Makes 12 Muffins