

# MAKE THE LOVE LAST!

## *Extending your Valentines Day Sales*



*Valentines Day is a bittersweet occasion for restaurant owners:*

*On one hand, the holiday sends sales soaring for a day. But during the rest of February, it's midwinter business as usual, which can be on the slower side. Don't settle into a slump, instead keep the momentum going with the following tips for a full month of strong, steady business!*

### **TIMING IS EVERYTHING**

*The 14th falls on a Monday this year, which is actually good news for restaurants who close on Mondays. Not only are you getting a bonus day of business by being open, you can stretch the holiday into "Valentines Day Weekend." Don't limit yourself to just dinner, either. Couples are always looking for a novel way to celebrate Valentines Day, and they're also in the mood to splurge. Consider a "lazy lovers brunch" on Saturday or Sunday which includes special champagne cocktails like mimosas and bellinis served alongside indulgent, upscale entrees like savory crepes all for a fixed price. Live music during brunch only adds to the sense of occasion.*

### **HOST AN "EVENTFUL" FEBRUARY**

*Special events are the perfect way to position your restaurant as a destination, not just a place to eat. Hosting events also instills a sense of community with your customers, giving them the sense they're part of something special. In the spirit of Valentines Day, why not host a weekly Perfect Pair alcohol-food tasting series for couples? For example, a series of four tastings could pair beer, wine, dessert wines, and spirits with food. To draw a younger crowd to your restaurant during February, offer a singles "Mix and Match" event on Friday the fifth or Saturday the sixth. At the event, singles can find a date to bring back the next week. Or, gives singles a chance to have fun without the pressure of finding a date: For 12 years, a Boston-area restaurant has hosted a "Flirt Fest" event with appetizers and fun games geared towards singles. Try teaming up with a local dating service and host a series of speed dating events, or go ahead and try organizing a speed dating event yourself.*

### **HAVE A HEART**

*Align your restaurant with a good cause that also plays off of the Valentines Day theme: February is American Heart Month. And February fifth is National Wear Red Day<sup>®</sup>, a nationwide event that encourages people to wear red in support of women's heart disease. Show your support of good cardiac health by offering a few selections on your menu that are heart-healthy. And consider hosting a special "red dress" event on February fifth. For every person that wears red, your restaurant will donate \$1 to the local chapter of the American Heart Association. Remember, customers are more concerned than ever before with charitable causes and by supporting a good cause, you'll win their "hearts."*



## SHOW THEM THE LOVE

*It's a basic training tactic: Reward the behavior you want more of! When it comes to dining patterns, you've already got a nice boost of business coming your way Valentines Day and the weekend prior, but why not incentivize business following the holiday? Create a tasteful info card that is returned with the guest check, stating your restaurant would "love" to see them again. Give a certificate for a "sweet treat" (a complimentary dessert), redeemable after their next meal with you. Or, take it one step further with a reward program that shows your "affection" for customers by giving them a special loyalty card. Each week in February, their card can be scanned to cash in on a "surprise" gift from a free appetizer for the table, to a special dessert plate meant to be shared. (Be sure to check with your Account Manager about the latest "mini" desserts available through the Culinary Secrets Desserts program.) Panera Bread Company is having tremendous success with their Panera Card program that does just that. Each customer's Panera Card is scanned at each visit to reveal a free surprise gift. The element of surprise creates powerful, lasting emotional connections, which is exactly what you want to have with your customers! To explore launching a reward program in your restaurant, ask your Account Manager about options and discounts available through Gava Systems.*



## HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

*While we've shared ideas for wooing customers to your restaurant all month long, don't forget the continuing trend of at-home entertaining or parties on premise (or POP). In the July/August Essence issue, we highlighted the newly popular "chef party," which involves one of your chefs doing a cooking demonstration at a customer's home for a group of guests. Integrate the Valentine theme into this concept with a "Cooking for Two" chef demo. Or, if you have a pastry chef, the focus can be on "Sweets for the Sweet." In addition to offering a POP event, don't miss out on the customer base that doesn't want to go near any restaurant around Valentines Day because of the crowds. Offer a "Love Nest" Valentines takeout special during the entire month of February and market it with the message that any night in February can be a special night with this package.*



## The Feast of Love

### ROMANCE THE CUSTOMER WITH A FUN APHRODISIAC-INSPIRED MENU

Customers always enjoy the "story" behind their food: what local farm raised their meat, how long your restaurant simmered its house-made stew, or where your chef traveled for an inspired dish. During the month of love, offer a few items with ingredients believed to be aphrodisiacs in certain cultures.

Here are a few ideas from the ordinary to the exotic to share with your culinary team:

**Star Anise** – Licorice flavor is believed in my cultures to increase that loving feeling. Ancient Greeks would chew the anise seed which also freshened breath.

**Tomatoes** – Today's kitchen staple was once called the pomme d' amour in France (the apple of love) because of its alleged amorous properties.

**Oysters** – The legend states that Casanova would eat 50 raw oysters for breakfast. Romans in the second century A.D. prized the oyster above all other foods for its aphrodisiac qualities.

**Dark Chocolate** – Chocolate increase levels of phenylethylamine and serotonin, two chemicals that have been shown to raise pleasure responses in the brain.

**Fennel** – Another licorice-flavored plant, fennel was one of the Egyptian aphrodisiacs of choice.

