

The Way to a Woman's Heart

By Sham Taylor

They say the easiest way to a man's heart is through his stomach, but what about a woman? Yes, as a man I would definitely admire someone who can throw down in the kitchen but I am not selfish. I have always had the ability to cook (without a pre-made meal w/ box instructions)

but I never did for others. Everyone from my friends to my parents said that I can cook, but what about my significant other? If I can't make a decent meal would this go a step in the wrong direction? As people, we tend to forget the simple things in life and always focus on the materialistic functions of the world. Sure, I can spend money to do certain things, but there is a certain satisfaction when I can do it myself. This could also move our relationship to a different level of intimacy, so I figured I should go for it.

We were dating for a few months and everything seemed to fall in place. I had a few days off from work, and my folks were out of town for the week, and they were cool with me having guests. We spoke on a Monday and I told her to come on over because I had a sur-



prise for her. At first she was very skeptical because I did not enlist the details of the evening. Unfortunately I revealed my plans and she was jubilated. She continuously began to think about what I should make. Now I am getting nervous because there is a standard I must meet now. All I planned to do originally was to whip up some rice and chicken but that was changed. Tuesday evening was the only time I had to figure out what I was going to make and how much it would cost.

Deciding the Meal

On Tuesday, I decided to inquire with my female co-workers about what type of foods they liked to gather ideas. I heard everything from Popeye's chicken to an exotic dish someone ate at The Chart House.

When I arrived home, I immediately began watching the Food Network and the Cooking Channel. For a couple of episodes I was lost, but then the light bulb came on! Constantly, the themes of the shows were either BBQ or Italian cuisine. I decided to combine both and make a “Sopranos Meets the Rodeo” dinner. The final meal I choose was spinach/bacon lasagna with Jack Daniels wings. I spent all day Wednesday prepping and cooking the meal, setting the stage for romance.

Preparation

Grocery shopping isn't exactly my forte, but I had to do it. In my house, I had spices, olive oil and staples such as eggs, butter, milk, flour, salt, pepper, flour and breadcrumbs, that I didn't need to purchase. My list composed of: one box of lasagna noodles, one container of Ricotta cheese, one box of spinach, one pound of bacon, Romano cheese, nutmeg, Provolone cheese, Mozzarella cheese, Gruyere cheese, cream, parmesan and, last but not least, parsley. I went grocery shopping at Walmart and my expenses were under \$30. There was a lot of cheese so I bought two shredded combination packages that had all of the cheese. The lasagna items were good to go.

I decided to purchase the wings from a nearby Spanish supermarket. Purchasing there saved me a lot of money compared to purchasing them at the grocery store. Now time for my favorite ingredient ... alcohol! The liquor store was in the same shopping center so travel was not an issue. One personal size of Jack

Daniels and a bottle of Riesling wine completed my shopping. It was time to head home and make magic in the kitchen.

Cooking the meal

I pre-heated the oven to 375 degrees. I combined the Ricotta cheese, spinach, Romano cheese, and two eggs in a bowl. I also began to cook the bacon strips slowly. I didn't have to cook the bacon for too long since I was going to dice it and mix it with the sauce later.

Once my mixture was completed, I used another burner to melt butter and mixed the flour until it began to bubble. I then added three cups of milk and continued to stir until it was thick. I then added nutmeg, spices, salt and pepper to the combination. I reduced the heat a little bit and then mixed in the gruyere, cream and parmesan. Once it had great texture and thickness I removed it from the burner.

I then diced the bacon and mixed it in with the sauce. Usually with lasagna, the traditional sauce is marinara sauce, but I changed it up. I had a combination of Alfredo/ Marinara sauce, one tablespoon of butter, sugar, and some of the wine. My spinach/ bacon lasagna was all prepped and it was time to combine and cook. For layering, I did sauce, lasagna noodles, and cream combo three times, repeating the sequence. Once the bowl was full, I sprinkled some cheese on top. Covered the dish in foil and baked it for 40 minutes.

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To save time, I cooked the chicken wings in a deep fryer. I actually used a combination of garlic powder, curry seasoning, breadcrumbs, and flour for the chicken. After frying the chicken, I made the sauce. I still had 15 minutes to spare before the lasagna was finished so time was not of the essence.

In a small bowl, I warmed up the barbecue sauce and then I added a little bit of pepper and Jack Daniels liquor. Keep in mind you need to add butter if you're going to use alcohol to

thicken the sauce. Once that was finished, I added the wings in the sauce to mix. Both items were completed and dinner was set, well at least the food.

Making the scene

To set the scene, I swept and mopped the floors. I also vacuumed the carpets and then wiped to counters down. I washed all the dishes and put them away. A sink full of dishes is not an attractive sight. I scented the air with fresh-

ener and opened the windows to air out the kitchen. With the meal prepared and the house clean, I then showered and changed.

Finally, my date arrived and she noticed immediately the savory scents from the kitchen and the clean environment.

Dinner for Two



The food was absolutely remarkable. I did not taste it before we ate so I was presently surprised. The combination of sauces with the com-

pliment of wine was an absolutely delightful decision. I highly recommend Jack Daniels wings. They were very crispy and the taste of the whiskey with the barbecue sauce was splendid.

Overall, dinner was a delight. My girlfriend was amazed by what I made. The whiskey in the food along with the combination of the wine made the evening fun. We had a great dinner and we enjoyed the night.

Photos courtesy of Microsoft Office Publisher 2007



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