

APPETITE FOR SEDUCTION

Kacie Moosbrugger

"The way to a man's heart is through his stomach." We've all heard it so many times, the phrase induces eye-rolling and conjures up an image of the perfect 1950s housewife, complete with checkered apron and separate twin beds. But, separate sleeping quarters are not usually what I have in mind if I'm going to be cooking for a man.

Yet there is something to it; after all, clichés become clichés for a reason. No man is able to resist a good meal. When you cook for a man, you have control of all five of his senses. This power is not to be underestimated.

SPICING UP YOUR LOVE LIFE

Aphrodisiacs have been used for centuries to enhance sexual enjoyment and stimulate libido. Pure hype? Or is there something to it?

There's no question that certain foods affect us, both emotionally and physically. Who hasn't experienced the food coma after Thanksgiving? What about that caffeine buzz after that triple mocha? Then of course there is that sugar high – and then low – after eating that second helping of birthday cake. So it seems logical that we can utilize these effects to our benefit – and to our enjoyment.

This month's recipe features an all-time favorite with the boys – pork chops. Chicken breasts can easily be substituted, but I like the texture and flavor of pork in this dish. With a warming, exotic Eastern-inspired spice rub, this recipe will be sure to whet his appetite for sweeter endeavors later.

The rub contains *Garam Masala*, a traditional Indian spice blend that includes cinnamon (known for relaxing, appetizing, and warming effects), cardamom (breath-freshening and gas-relieving properties – always a plus, right?), black pepper (increases cellular oxygenation), and coriander (a mild stimulant). Cumin rounds out the spice blend, adding an alluring smoky aroma and flavor. *Garam Masala* can be purchased preblended in just about any grocery store; if you prefer to blend your own, many gourmet or health food stores offer spices by weight, so you don't have to buy separate jars of each ingredient.

As if the *Garam Masala* blend wasn't enough, we've punched up the aphrodisiac qualities by adding a few more flavorful components. Ginger is famous for its ability to stimulate the libido, and is recommended in ancient Ayurvedic texts. Nutmeg has been proven in studies to increase potency in males, and even has mild narcotic and hallucinogenic properties!

ON THE SIDE

Serve this meal with a simple side salad of leafy greens. Arugula has a pleasing peppery bite, and has been used in aphrodisiac concoctions for centuries. Drizzle with a little olive oil, a squeeze of



fresh lemon juice, sprinkle with a couple minced cloves of garlic, toss, garnish with chopped apricots and goat cheese, and you're done. Yes, garlic; it increases circulation, warms the body, and has a dramatic effect on increasing the appetite. And if you're both eating it, the odor won't be an issue.

If greens aren't your thing, try a warmed pita or flatbread dipped into garlic hummus. Chickpeas, the main component of hummus, have been known since the 16th century as a powerful aphrodisiac. So much so that Dodonaeus, a Flemish botanist, declared that they were not to be fed to scholars and priests.

A cocktail is always nice for relaxation. A hot hard apple or pear cider with a cinnamon stick garnish is particularly nice for warming up a cold Minnesota night; a chai tea with brandy works well too. Or even just a simple soft red, such as a Pinot Noir, would go nicely.

For dessert, get creative. Chocolate and strawberries are fine, but what about dried figs dipped in honey? Any type of finger food – especially dipped into something sticky, necessitating licking – is great. And an open fig is thought to resemble a woman's nether regions. Subliminal messaging, anyone?

This recipe is easy to prepare and requires little hands-on time, leaving you free to entertain your guest. It is also light, without being too filling – which is important, because we're betting that after you serve this to your man, you can expect to get a little spiced up yourself!

"Exotically Spiced Pork Loin Chops"

- 1-½ lb boneless center loin pork chops, sliced to about ½ inch
- 1 t. Garam Masala
- 1/8 t. powdered ginger
- 1/8 t. ground nutmeg
- 1/8 t. cayenne pepper (or to taste)
- 1 t. salt
- 2 T. olive oil

In a small bowl, mix all dried spices thoroughly. Sprinkle spice blend liberally over all pieces of pork (you should have 5–6 pieces). Use fingers or the back of a fork to press the spices into the meat. Spiced pork may be refrigerated for up to 4 hours before cooking.

Heat olive oil in large sauté pan over medium heat until hot, about 2 minutes.

Place chops in oil and cook about 3–4 minutes without flipping; you may rotate cuts if pan does not distribute heat thoroughly. (If you are preparing the arugula salad, do so now.)

Turn the chops and continue cooking until done, about 1–5 minutes depending on thickness of cut. Pork is done when outsides are nicely browned and internal temperature reaches 160° F.

Let pork rest for 2–3 minutes before serving.

Serves 2.

Notes:

You may end up with leftover meat, but you don't want to err on the side of leaving him hungry! Leftovers taste great warmed up with couscous or applesauce.



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