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Valentine Gifts From The Heart

By Rondi Hillstrom Davis and Janell Sewall Oakes

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One of my fondest childhood memories is of my mother helping me make a Valentine's box to take to school. We pulled out white paste, an old shoebox, scraps of doilies, and construction paper. There was a flurry of activity as I cut and pasted, and imagined my box filled with homemade Valentines from classmates and secret admirers.

My favorite teacher in the fourth grade was Mrs. Dearing. For Valentine's Day, I wanted to make her something special. My mother had a recipe for sugar cookies that she had made as a child. We stayed up late rolling out the dough, long after my brothers had gone to bed. Carefully, we sprinkled the cookies with sugar and waited for the sparkling wafers to emerge from the oven.

To this day, when I smell sugar cookies baking, I think about Valentine's Day and that special present for my teacher.

SUGAR COOKIES

Ingredients

1/2-cup unsalted butter at room temperature

3/4-cup sugar

1 large egg

1 Tablespoon milk

1/8-teaspoon salt

1/2-teaspoon vanilla

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2-cups flour

Granulated sugar for decoration

1 ceramic cookie mold (available at craft stores or from www.cookieartexchange.com)

A plastic drinking straw

1/4 inch satin ribbon

Directions

1. In a medium sized mixing bowl, cream together the butter and the sugar. Stir in the egg, milk, and vanilla. Mix in the flour and salt.
2. Knead the mixture into a dough. Chill for 15 minutes.
3. Use the ceramic cookie mold make a fancy Valentine cookie. Coat the mold with cooking spray. Pour a little granulated sugar into the mold, tilt until sugar covers the bottom, and tap out any excess. Press dough into the mold and turn it out onto a greased baking sheet. Use a plastic drinking straw to make a hole in the top of the cookie. Sprinkle with sugar and chill for 30 minutes.
4. Repeat the process for each cookie. (You will only need to coat the mould with cooking spray once, but you will have to re-sugar the mould for each cookie.)

If you don't have a cookie mold, on a lightly floured surface, roll out the dough to 1/4 inch thick. Use a heart shaped cookie cutter to make your cookies. Use a plastic drinking straw to make a hole in the top of each cookie. Sprinkle the tops with sugar. Place on a greased cookie sheet.

5. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Bake all chilled cookies for about 10 minutes, until golden. Cool completely.
6. Tie a 9-inch piece of satin ribbon through the hole of each cookie. On a tag, attach your special message or Valentine wish.

Instead of store bought Valentines, encourage your child to make a gift that will fill him with pride and accomplishment.

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Valentine's Day Gift Ideas For Married Couples

By Jill Renee

For young dating couples that are still experiencing the passion and all-encompassing rush of new love, Valentine's Day can hold great importance. Impressing someone with elaborate gifts can be one way of telling the person that you are dating that you think they are special, and that you have great hopes for the relationship. Valentine's Day gifts in this stage of a relationship can tell people a lot about each other, and can be a good indicator of where the relationship may be headed.

What about people who have been married for a while?

For married couples Valentine's Day isn't less important...just different and, in many ways, better. It is a time to celebrate love and reminisce about all the Valentine's Days that you have spent together. Gifts given on Valentine's Day to a spouse can have much more significance, because you should know your spouse well enough to give something that has special meaning. A diamond anniversary band or three stone ring given to a wife tells her that you are glad that you married her and that you value your life together. A gold watch given to a husband tells him that you appreciate him and want him to have the very best.

Married couples don't have to give elaborate gifts on Valentine's Day; a meaningful gift that says you care or a sweet gesture of love are just as special. When you are married, the thought that is put into the gift is the important factor. A jewelry gift that says "I know you, and I know what makes you happy" goes a long way toward making someone feel that they are special and valued. If your wife likes heart shapes then giving her a diamond heart pendant or bracelet with heart-shaped charms can mean much more to her than simply handing her a gold chain. It shows that you know what she likes, you listen to her, that you put thought into the gift. Jewelry that celebrates each other's individuality as well as the life that you have made together can be priceless, no matter what the actual cost.

Giving your spouse something they have been considering buying for a while is a good way to show your love. To come up with an original Valentine's Day gift think about what is important to your spouse; what makes him or her happy. Does your husband love to golf? Give him a gift certificate for a round of golf at his favorite course. Does your wife love classical music? Tickets for a night out to see the symphony let's you plan a second night to spend together. A gift of jewelry is a lasting reminder of this Valentine's Day and your relationship – and jewelry is always appreciated. And don't forget about giving flowers – they may seem traditional but flowers brighten a winter day and are romantic. One of the reasons that successful marriages stay that way is because the spouses try never to take each other for granted, and the right gift on Valentine's Day can go a long way in proving your commitment to that ideal.

Jill Renee is the president of Danforth Diamond, an online jewelry store specializing in quality engagement rings—on the Web at <http://www.danforthdiamond.com>. With 50 years in the jewelry business, the Danforth family developed their site as a resource to help you find the perfect engagement ring.

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