



## Tips, Tricks, Shortcuts & Substitutions

# VALENTINE'S DAY MENU

Follow this list of tasks (and cheats!) to make the most efficient use of your time.

Plan out your timing -- maybe you can do a few things a day in advance!

### FIRST COURSE:

#### PASTRY

You need to thaw the phyllo pastry in the refrigerator overnight. You should assemble it just before baking it on the day of service. It takes only 5 minutes to bake!

You can purchase pre-made phyllo cups in the dessert section of the any grocer's freezer aisles. (Follow package directions for baking.)

If you prefer, you can use puff-pastry (follow package directions) OR homemade or store-bought (pre-made) pie crust.

#### CARAMELIZED ONIONS

Onions can be cooked a day or two in advance... or cook them down, and freeze for up to two weeks.

#### BACON

Cook on a sheet pan, up to two days in advance. Refrigerate, and then dice it cold. It can be slippery if bring to room temperature before dicing.

You can use pre-cooked bacon, or even salad-topping bacon (use low salt OR omit salt from the onion.)

### ENTRÉE:

#### CHICKEN

You can cut the chicken breasts into heart shapes a day in advance, but be sure to keep them cold and well-wrapped. Always store raw protein (especially chicken!) on the bottom shelf of your refrigerator.

If you don't want to butterfly the chicken into a heart shape, you can leave it whole, just make sure that the thermometer reads 165°F in the thickest part of the chicken before serving.

Tired of chicken? Substitute boneless or bone-in pork chops, or faux-tien of choice, for chicken.

#### SWEET POTATOES:

You can save time if you don't cut the sweet potato into fries, just scrub each potato, and then poke each sweet potato with a fork several times.

Oven baking takes up to 40 mins. OR, you can then put them in the microwave on HIGH for 3 min. Turn over, cook for 3 min.

Repeat until cooked through. (Exact time depends on your microwave's wattage.)

### DESSERT:

#### CRÊPES

Crepe batter can be made up to two days before the meal is served.

Crêpes can be cooked the day before; Reheat in the microwave very briefly before rolling them up (otherwise, they may crack).

Don't have time to make crêpes? Serve the cherries over slices of pound cake, angelfood cake, or pre-made dessert cakes.

#### CHERRY FILLING

Cherry filling can be cooked the day before, chilled, and then reheated on the day-of service.

You can skip making the cherry filling and use canned pie filling...but really, it's very easy to make, and homemade tastes SO much better than canned!

#### LOW-CARB OR GLUTEN-FREE?

Cut the carbs and go gluten-free:  
a] Use Splenda/Equal/Stevia etc. instead of sugar for the cherries.  
b] Instead of crêpes, serve over Halo-Top or other low-carb frozen treat!