

Here we are in the midst of February. Today is Valentine's Day — a day that people seem to either love or hate depending on the status of their love lives. A few days ago I was left wondering, "Where does all of this mushy love stuff come from?"

Classic Greek mythology tells us that Aphrodite, the goddess of love, lust and beauty could make any man fall in love with her at a glance. Aphrodite was born when the god of the sky, Uranus, was castrated by Cronus. Cronus threw the severed genitals into the ocean, which began to churn violently. The churning ocean created sea foam out of which Aphrodite rose, becoming a woman.

From this Greek goddess of love stems the word aphrodisiac. An aphrodisiac is any food, drug, potion or other agent that arouses sexual desire. Although debated, the belief that certain foods or drugs can arouse sexuality has been popular for millennia. Some common aphrodisiacs include bananas, asparagus, celery, oysters, vanilla, chocolate, nuts, honey, avocados, strawberries and raspberries. In accordance with the day of love



Julia Hansen

(or getting some lovin') here's a recipe that includes several of these aphrodisiac foods. If you are looking for a last-minute gift to make for your sweetie pie, consider chocolate chip banana bread. Not only does it use four aphrodisiac ingredients, it is simple and delicious.

Cooking with Julia

Ingredients:

2 cups flour
1 cup sugar
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon vanilla
1 cup mashed ripe banana
1/2 cup unsalted butter (softened)
2 eggs
1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
1/2 cup chopped walnuts

Instructions:

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease the bottom only of a 9x5-inch loaf pan.
Combine all ingredients except chocolate chips and walnuts in a bowl. Blend well on medium speed of mixer. Stir in chocolate chips and walnuts. Pour batter into loaf pan.
Bake 60-65 minutes or until toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool 10 minutes in pan. Remove from pan. Cool completely.



chocolate chip banana bread

Design by
Antionette Bedessie/Index

February overflows with massive marketing mix

Hunter S. Thompson's favorite way to describe the state of affairs in our complicated world was reacting to rationalized acts of self-preservation and advancement with "Fear and Loathing." Back then that was all good and well, but now, thanks to mass media, I think the likeliest candidate for a new counter-culture catch phrase is "Dazed and Confused."

Last week, the news featured events such as Super Tuesday, Super Bowl Sunday, Fat Tuesday, Mardi Gras and Ash Wednesday.

Although I will go on the record to state that I was not confused, one readily can see how people are likely to mix up sweaty athletes hurling their armored bodies at one another, politicians doing everything they can for that last vote, Catholics walking around with ash on their foreheads and people drunkenly posing for the newest "Girls Gone Wild Fat Tuesday Special."

Maybe that last one could stand to be renamed — or per-

haps marketed to an entirely different crowd.

Every single one of the aforementioned parties was trying to sell something to you last week. Wait, let me rephrase that — they were trying to get you to buy something. From the poor, brainwashed, win-or-die political canvassers to the NFL's attempts to make the Super Bowl available for viewing only on its private cable network, money is the name of the game and everything else comes second.

"Who are those guys?" I remember someone asking during the Super Bowl each time the camera would cut to some balding yet sharp-looking businessmen in private boxes above the stadium. "Oh, they own the NFL," someone replied. From the way her pupils dilated I could tell she was either coming to

a realization or was on some sort of drug, prescription or otherwise. "Someone owns the NFL?"

Yeah, someone owns the NFL, and those fine physical specimens down on the field are treated nicely because they make money for those old guys in the box. But at least they're making something.

Do you have any friends who stalwartly support a particular presidential candidate? Do they constantly talk about all the great things so-and-so has done?"

Do you know where newspapers get all of their news on politics? If it's not a reference to an individual's voting record, then the odds are it comes from his or her political headquarters. I'm also guessing that these headquarters likely aren't go-

ing to say bad things about their candidates.

Why do professional sports ban performance-enhancing drugs? Because they want you to believe they're superhuman on their own — because they worked hard, not because a corporation like the NFL probably has the money to invent its own steroid or human growth hormone. Who knows, maybe it even does. This is why they drug test: not because these drugs are illegal, but because they make the NFL look bad. The NFL has PR representatives who carefully control the dissemination of information to keep discussions running on tracks they've planned out for you beforehand.

Just like the emerald glasses in the book "The Wizard of Oz," they want you to believe what you're seeing is real — but it's not. I'll cite television as a prime example because my background is photography.

It's hard to take a good picture that encompasses all of an event because you can't really encompass all of an event

with
Mark
Hardy



that's
what
HE
said

in one frame. You cannot see what the crowd at that large political rally really looks like, or how few people are there other than the ones who were asked to sit behind the politician and look really excited. They only tell you what they know will make you more likely to support them, and thus, give them money.

We do everything we can to make you a good worker, even making Sunday our day of rest and closing bars early. Don't start a work week with a hangover, that makes you less productive! Less productive means less money.

Finally, I would like to cite a case in which Hillary Clinton, at a political rally, talked about a court case in which

she was involved, where a business wanted to avoid paying for injuries the workers had sustained on the job. Clinton thought that this was unjust, and that it should not be allowed to happen in America. Hillary Clinton, if you didn't know, was a very successful corporate attorney working for the defense of this company — in fact, fighting to bar the employees from receiving due compensation. Perhaps this is why Wal-Mart wanted her on its board.

Oh yeah, and the news talked about all of those confusing things, but one event escaped my notice last week, so I thought I would mention it: February is Black History Month. Respect.

Health www.nermc.com
with Dr. Charles Pritchard, D.O.
Northeast **Talk**
Regional Medical Center

Heart disease remains No. 1 cause of death despite awareness increase

Americans are more educated about heart disease than ever before.

They've heard about the signs of a heart attack and know how to prevent the condition. However, being educated about the disease and actively managing it are different, leading many people to be overconfident in their ability to prevent and treat the No. 1 killer of Americans.

Increased awareness has, in fact, led to a decrease in deaths caused by heart disease in the 10 years between 1994 and 2004. Death rates from cardiovascular disease declined 25 percent, and deaths from coronary heart disease declined 33 percent.

However, nearly one million Americans still die every year from some form of heart disease, which includes heart attacks, high blood pressure (hypertension), congenital heart defects, chest pain or cardiovascular disease.

While deaths related to those conditions decreased, the rates of diabetes and obesity continue to rise. Obesity can lead to high blood pressure and diabetes, which greatly increase a person's chance of developing cardiovascular disease. Two out of three people with diabetes will die from heart disease or stroke, according to the American Diabetes Association.

Women often think breast cancer is more of a threat than heart disease, but 11 times as many women die of heart disease. Women also consider breast cancer a women's disease, partly because they usually know another woman who has had breast cancer but might not know a woman who has had a heart attack. Women often think breast cancer treatment is more devastating, and therefore, women fear it more than heart disease.

Most people are surprised to learn

that heart attacks are twice as deadly in women as in men. Thirty-eight percent of female heart-attack victims will die within one year of the attack.

Although people might know more about how to recognize and treat a heart attack than ever before, there are other steps they should take to prevent heart disease before it happens. Incorporate the following heart-healthy habits into your daily routine:

- **Eat a balanced diet.** Seek out food choices that include lean meats, whole grains, vegetables and fruits. Avoid too many calories from sugar and fats that contain few nutrients. Look for food with the American Heart Association logo to make good choices. Seek out new recipes and restaurants that offer healthy options. Visit www.mypyramid.gov for personalized diet guidelines.

- **Get plenty of exercise.** Adults should get at least 30 minutes of

moderate exercise five days of the week. Exercise should include a combination of aerobic activity, weight-bearing activities and stretching. Exercise does not have to be in a gym or a structured class setting. Incorporate exercise into everyday activities by taking the stairs instead of the elevator or going for a walk during lunch. Find an accountability partner for motivational support.

- **Watch your cholesterol levels.** A high cholesterol level is one of the major controllable risk factors for heart disease and stroke. About 17 percent of American adults have high total cholesterol, which is a major risk factor for developing heart disease. Get cholesterol levels under control by eating foods low in cholesterol, trans fats and saturated fats, maintaining a healthy weight and getting regular physical activity. A doctor might prescribe medication to lower

cholesterol levels if needed.

- **Stop smoking.** The surgeon general described smoking as "the leading preventable cause of disease and deaths in the United States." Smoking cigarettes is a major cause of cardiovascular disease, which can result in heart attacks. See your doctor to develop a smoking cessation program even if you've tried quitting before. It can take several tries to successfully quit, but each time you learn what will and won't work for you.

Although friends, family and other resources can be invaluable in learning about heart disease prevention and treatment, your doctor can design the best plan to manage your risk factors. Taking a proactive approach could add years to your life. For more information on heart disease and prevention, contact your physician or Dr. Pritchard at 660-626-2235.

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