



Have a GREEN Valentine's Day by GROW Commissioners

Valentine's Day is a great time to share your love and appreciation for those whom are special to you. But did you know that Valentine's cards, plastic wrapping and packaging, and consumer mentality, Valentine's Day actually contributes massive amounts of waste and carbon emissions? Rather, show your love by making choices that are waste-free, ethical, and good for the Earth. Consider the following to help you and the planet have a Happy GREEN Valentine's Day:

- **Buy Fair Trade chocolates.** Fair Trade chocolate comes from cacao beans harvested by farmers and workers who are paid a fair price, a livable wage and have a safe working environment. Fair trade standards ban forced labor and child labor practices which are common in the cocoa trade. This labeling

also encourages environmentally-sustainable farming practices. Look for this symbol  on the packaging.

Examples of Fair Trade Brands:

- i. *Moser Roth* Chocolatiers (Aldi) \$
- ii. *alter eco* chocolates (Whole Foods) \$\$\$ (organic, gluten free, and cacao bean trees are grown using "regenerative agricultural" practices. Trees are grown alongside other trees/plants imitating a natural forest ecosystem.)
- iii. *Equal Exchange* chocolates (on line) \$\$\$
- iv. *Endangered Species* chocolates (on line) \$\$\$ (10% of profits donated to organizations that support endangered species)
- v. *Lake Champlain* chocolates (on line) \$\$\$

*NOTE: We are aware of criticisms that some fair trade practices do not improve the living standards of their workers. Most businesses abide by moral and ethical practices.

- **Buy a living plant in place of cut flowers to give your sweetheart.** For example, one can buy an orchid that stays in bloom and looks beautiful for at least one month.

- **Go out to a local restaurant for dinner.** Using your browser, you can search "restaurants in 60154" zip code on your phone or computer. Also, one can consider eating a *plant-based meal* that is healthy for you and has a lower carbon footprint. Search on your browser "small business vegetarian restaurant near me"

- **Buy a gift that was made locally, by small start-up business, and made with materials that are sustainable,** that is, where the manufacturing process did not cause great harm to workers (not made in a "sweat shop") and materials used are recyclable (natural materials like cotton and wool over synthetic blends that are forms of plastic made from oil/fossil fuels). For example, Serrv sells items made sustainably and by artisans whose work provides a living wage for their family through fair trade.

- **Give an Experience.** Build memories that will last a lifetime by gifting tickets to the theater or sporting event, visit a museum, or explore nature by foot or bike.
- **Do It Yourself gift.** Bake their favorite treat, cook a meal, and make a card.
- **Green wrap your gift.** Consider wrapping a gift with an old map, newspaper/comics, or a scarf or towel and use reusable ribbons.

When you love your sweetheart in a GREEN way, you show that you also promote good healthy practices that benefit all of humanity and this earth.

Green Fact of the Month

“Palm oil is used in food (like chocolates), cosmetics, cleaning products and biofuel....To reduce its impacts on biodiversity, palm oil needs to be produced more sustainably by avoiding deforestation and cutting non-food palm oil use.” <https://iucn.org/resources/issues-brief/palm-oil-and-biodiversity>

Recipe of the Month

Warm your Valentine's heart with a homemade gift. This granola recipe is quick to prepare. It's also easy to customize to preferences and dietary choices by making it vegan (use maple syrup instead of honey), nut-free (use seeds like pumpkin or sunflower instead of almonds), gluten-free (choose gluten-free oats), dairy-free (serve with dairy-free milk/yogurt), etc. Makes for a great breakfast or snack. Surprise your Valentine with breakfast in bed or place in a mason jar and tie a ribbon around it for a delicious homemade gift.

Homemade Granola

makes 5 cups

Ingredients

1/2 cup neutral oil, such as sunflower or grapeseed

1/2 cup honey or maple syrup

1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1/2 teaspoon salt

3 cups old-fashioned rolled oats

1 cup sliced almonds

1 cup raisins or other dried, chopped fruit

Instructions

- **Heat the oven to 300°F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.**
- Place the oil, honey, cinnamon, and salt in a large bowl and whisk to combine.
- **Add the oats and almonds and stir to coat well.**
- Transfer the mixture to the prepared baking sheet and spread into an even layer.
- **Bake for 20 minutes, stirring halfway through.** The granola is ready when golden-brown and the almonds have toasted (it will still feel wet coming out of the oven but will dry as it cools).
- Place the baking sheet on a wire rack and sprinkle on the raisins or fruit. If you want clumps of granola, press and tamp down the granola before it cools, which will help it stick together. Cool completely before storing.
- Transfer the cooled granola to an airtight container and store at room temperature for up to 1 month.

Source: www.thekitchn.com

Submitted by Kari Roberg, GROW Commissioner

Have a plant-based recipe you'd like to share with the community? Send it to GROW@westchester-il.gov for consideration for future newsletters.