Pairings: Cooking For Two

OK, you caught us: Yes, this is a Valentine's Day post. But like peanut butter and jelly, peanut butter and chocolate, or peanut butter and fluff (What ... we really like peanut butter!), these dinner pairings are a perfect match any time of year.

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Whether you're celebrating Valentine's Day with a partner, Galentine's Day with your partner in crime, or just want to treat a lucky someone to a classy meal for two, we've got ideas! We've put together seven menus with dinner recipes fit for any special occasion, plus desserts for two, and a bonus side dish or appetizer for good measure.

Farm Fresh

This menu will transport you and your loved one to a rustic farmhouse table in the country. An impressive-looking rack of lamb takes center stage, with warm and comforting scalloped potatoes on the side. To complete the rustic meal, we look to the all-American apple but transform it with French flair into individually portioned tartes tatin.

Dijon Herb Crusted Rack of Lamb

COLEY COOKS

Garlic Parmesan Scalloped Potatoes

A FLAVOR JOURNA

Apple Tarte Tatin for Two

DESSERT FOR TWO

★★★★☆

Dijon Herb Crusted Rack of Lamb

If you haven't made lamb before, there's no reason to be intimidated! Like many roasts, it's actually quite simple. Panko is whirred up with oil and herbs for a quick bread coating to be pressed on the meat, and then it's just a matter of popping the rack of lamb in the oven until a good meat thermometer tells you it's done. The total time it takes to make is under 45 minutes from prep to your plate.

Dijon Herb Crusted Rack of Lamb by Coley Cooks

Garlic Parmesan Scalloped Potatoes

Like the rest of this menu, these potatoes are fairly simple to make but gussied up in their presentation. Rich cream and cheese add decadence to a simple potato side, and the thin slices and golden crust make for a decadent-looking dish. Top it off with a few chopped chives for extra color and panache.

Garlic Parmesan Scalloped Potatoes by A Flavor Journal

Apple Tarte Tatin for Two

"Tarte tatin" sounds fancy, but it's actually just sauteed apples and caramel sauce baked over puff pastry. While this recipe gives you instructions for a quick 15-minute puff pastry from scratch, you can use pre-made dough if you prefer. This recipe calls for individual cast iron skillets; however, you can use whatever metal pan you have on hand.

Apple Tarte Tatin for Two by Dessert For Two

Date-Night Decadence

If you're really looking to impress, the only real question is … steak or lobster? This menu goes with the old New York classic: Lobster Newburg. It's a rich main course that needs a simple side, like this sautéed asparagus. If asparagus isn't your thing, a side of French green beans would make a great substitute. In keeping with a New York state of mind, we finish off with a cheesecake (although we've chosen a chocolate one for a little extra indulgence).

Lobster Newberg

A FAMILY FEAST

Garlic Butter Sauteed Asparagus

RASA MALAYSIA

★★★★☆

Chocolate Cheesecakes + Salted Cara…

DESSERT FOR TWO

Lobster Newberg

Lobster Newburg pairs large chunks of whole lobster meat with a rich cognac cream sauce. Between cooking the fresh lobsters, freeing the meat inside, and then making the sauce, this recipe is a bit more work intensive than some of the others on this list … but you'll be rewarded greatly for your efforts.

Lobster Newberg by A Family Feast

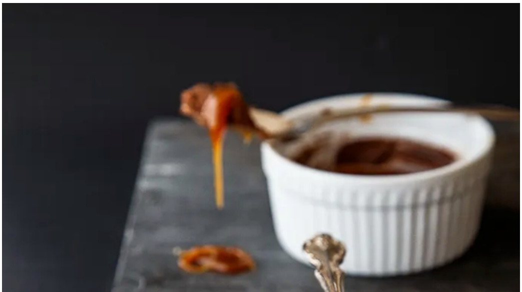
Garlic Butter Sautéed Asparagus

Your work prepping the lobster is balanced out by this super simple asparagus recipe. Buy young, thin spears, break off the bottoms, and do a quick sauté for 10 minutes in butter and garlic. That's it! Season and serve.

Garlic Butter Sautéed Asparagus by Rasa Malaysia

Chocolate Cheesecakes + Salted Caramel Sauce

An extravagant main course deserves an equally over-the-top dessert. But perhaps you want something easy after wrangling a couple of clawed beasts? Cheesecake *can* be easy, particularly when using a no-bake version like this chocolate one that serves two using three ingredients. It's up to you whether you want to make the salted caramel sauce from scratch or use a pre-made version — it'll be delicious either way. Do make it ahead of time, as it needs to chill for four hours before serving.



Chocolate Cheesecakes + Salted Caramel Sauce by Dessert For Two

My Vegan Valentine

This indulgent vegan menu starts off with savory stuffed mushrooms, then moves on to a bright lemon-asparagus risotto for an early taste of spring, before ending with an elegant chocolate pot de creme.

Stuffed Mushrooms

ELANA'S PANTRY

Vegan Lemon and Asparagus Risotto

VEGANOSITY

★★★★★

Chocolate Pots De Creme (Vegan & Pa…

DETOXINISTA

★★★★★

Stuffed Mushrooms

These flavorful stuffed mushrooms are filled with the powerful flavors of sun-dried tomatoes, pine nuts, and garlic. Not only are they vegan, but they're also grain free, making them suitable for anyone following a Paleo diet as well.

Stuffed Mushrooms by Elana's Pantry

Vegan Lemon and Asparagus Risotto

Lemon and asparagus are another classic flavor match made in heaven (it's why hollandaise sauce tastes so good ladled on top of asparagus). By cooking the risotto low and slow, the rice becomes plenty creamy from its own natural starches — no cheese required here.

Vegan Lemon and Asparagus Risotto by Veganosity

Chocolate Pots De Creme (Vegan & Paleo)

Pot de crème are a delicate soft French custard traditionally made with plenty of eggs and cream. For this vegan version, the thickness comes from coconut oil and soaked cashews, while almond milk takes the place of the usual dairy. Sweetened with a hint of maple syrup and brought to life with a touch of sea salt, you'll be happy that this recipe makes four servings!

Chocolate Pots De Creme (Vegan & Paleo) by Detoxinista

Italian-American

This menu is made for a couple who's not afraid of carbs! A downsized lasagna means you won't be eating leftovers for a solid week, and small-batch breadsticks ensure your side is nice and fresh. To top it all off, we went with a classic tiramisu ... for two.

Lasagna for Two

CHEF JULIE YOON

★★★★☆

Small Batch Garlic Parmesan Breadst…

I WASH YOU DRY

Kahlua Tiramisu for Two #SundaySupp…

THAT SKINNY CHICK CA…

Lasagna for Two

This lasagna is not only sized for two, it's also an easy recipe. A quick meat sauce, replete with cream for richness, is whipped up in a pan before layering with oven-ready noodles, a ricotta mixture, and mozzarella cheese in a loaf pan for all the traditional flavors you love. Depending on how hungry you are, you may just get enough leftovers for a quick weeknight meal later on in the week.

Lasagna for Two by Chef Julie Yoon

Small Batch Garlic Parmesan Breadsticks

Well, this is a first for me: Breadsticks made ... in a blender? OK, yes, you do still bake them in the oven, but the dough can be made in a heavy duty blender (or food processor, or, of course, by hand). The recipe calls for a sprinkling of rosemary in addition to garlic powder and parmesan cheese.

Small Batch Garlic Parmesan Breadsticks by I Wash You Dry

Kahlua Tiramisu for Two

If you haven't tried tiramisu before, this recipe for two is a great way to try it. Tiramisu is akin to a trifle, with layers of ladyfingers dipped in coffee, whipped mascarpone cheese, and cocoa. Traditionally, tiramisu contains marsala wine or rum; this version contains a subtler spike of creamy Kahlua that will win over any tiramisu newbie.

Kahlua Tiramisu for Two by That Skinny Chick Can Bake

That's Amore!

This Italian menu starts with roots in the old country — the prosciutto and melon appetizer has been appearing on menus for centuries. Carbonara, on the other hand, most likely originated in the 20th century, but pairs well with *prosciutto e melone* due to their common base of simple preparation to showcase Italian meats and produce. In a menu focused on highlighting individual ingredients using a minimalist touch — but also highlighting contrast — the perfect finish is something over the top, like a homemade butterscotch budino, or Italian pudding. You have time for it after sailing through your appetizer and main course, and it will all come together for a menu that will knock the socks off even a seasoned foodie.

Prosciutto & Melon
THE OPTIMALIST KITCHEN

Lemony Carbonara Pasta (Cooking for…
MY RECIPE REVIEWS

Butterscotch Budino With Salted Car…
KITCHEN KONFIDENCE

Prosciutto & Melon

This traditional Italian appetizer is one of those great dishes that shines because of (or is it in spite of?) its simplicity. The sweetness of a fresh ripe melon is the perfect foil for salty cured prosciutto.

Prosciutto & Melon by The Optimalist Kitchen

Lemony Carbonara Pasta

If you live in the Southern United States, seek out some of those late-season Meyer lemons for this dish! This recipe uses standard American bacon, but feel free to substitute guanciale or pancetta for a deeper meaty flavor.

Lemony Carbonara Pasta by My Recipe Reviews

Butterscotch Budino With Salted Caramel and Pretzel Crumble

This impressive dessert takes a little more effort (although not necessarily time). You'll be making a caramel from scratch, which is not complicated but does require you to stay vigilant and act quickly when the mixture comes to the right temperature. You'll be rewarded for your effort with a luxurious dessert that's sugary, salty, sweet, and crunchy all at once.

Butterscotch Budino With Salted Caramel and Pretzel Crumble by **Kitchen Konfidence**

Steakhouse Classics

This menu will transport you to the finest old-school steakhouse. Whet your appetite with salty grilled oysters (a well-known aphrodisiac, after all!), then move on to the epitome of luxury: a juicy bacon-wrapped filet mignon. To finish it all off, loosen your belt buckle a notch to make room for an all-American chocolate chip cookie sundae served in individual cast-iron skillets.

Grilled (or Baked) Oysters

RASA MALAYSIA

Bacon-wrapped Filet Mignon

SOMETHING NEW FOR ...

★★★★★

Cookie Sundaes for Two

DESSERT FOR TWO

Grilled (or Baked) Oysters

A few simple ingredients are all it takes to pull together a special appetizer of grilled oysters: parsley, garlic, paprika ... and of course butter, seafood's best friend. These work just as well baked in the oven if it's too chilly to grill.

Grilled (or Baked) Oysters by Rasa Malaysia

Bacon-Wrapped Filet Mignon

There's hardly a main dish out there that can compete with filet mignon when it comes to treating yourself. Like most steaks, simple is best when it comes to preparation: a little olive oil, salt, and pepper, wrap with bacon, and 12 minutes later, you've got perfect steaks. It's a delicious recipe for two with minimal effort (and minimal clean up).

Bacon-Wrapped Filet Mignon by Something New For Dinner

Cookie Sundaes for Two

Piled on thick and baked in a skillet, these chocolate-chip cookies are more brownie than anything else. Let your favorite ice cream melt away on top for an à la mode indulgence — if you're feeling especially ambitious, you can make your own ice cream to treat your sweetie.

Cookie Sundaes for Two by Dessert For Two

Love Lightly

If you're looking for a menu that won't leave you feeling weighed down, give this one a try. For the first course, start with a flavorful soup, then proceed to the main dish of tender salmon and roasted vegetables, then finish off with a light and airy fruit mousse.

5-Ingredient Butternut Squash Soup

OMNIVORE'S COOKBOOK

★★★★☆

Lemon Dill Salmon with Vegetables i…

AVERIE COOKS

Strawberry Mousse (in the Blender)

DESSERT FOR TWO

5-Ingredient Butternut Squash Soup

Don't let the short ingredient list fool you — this soup is *full* of flavor. Coconut milk makes the soup creamy, ginger adds a gentle kick, and sautéed mushrooms bring that savory "umami" flavor to round it all out. The squash gets roasted on a sheet pan for an extended period of time (up to 90 minutes), but that's all hands-off time, and you don't have to do any chopping beforehand. Once it's done roasting, you blend everything together and just like that, you've got soup.

5-Ingredient Butternut Squash Soup by Omnivore's Cookbook

Lemon Dill Salmon with Vegetables in Parchment

This easy 20-minute dish is cooked "en papilotte," the French term for something cooked in a parchment paper packet. Zucchini and summer squash are piled into the packet right along with the salmon, lemon, and dill for something that looks and sounds fancy ... but is actually quick, easy, and has next to no clean up required.

Lemon Dill Salmon with Vegetables in Parchment by Averie Cooks

Strawberry Mousse (in the Blender)

Starting off your meal with two healthy recipes allows you some room to splurge on an indulgent dessert that's light on the tongue (if heavy on cream). The fruit in this mousse actually comes from jam, meaning you could shake things up using any flavor that you like. You can pull this recipe together in no time: The jam is quickly blended with 3 types of dairy, then put in glasses and chilled. No cooking required. Feel free to use low-fat sour cream and cream cheese if you want to lighten it up a bit.

Strawberry Mousse by Dessert for Two

Dessert   Dinner   Holiday   Valentine's Day   Cooking For Two