

Tips to Safely Celebrate Valentine's Day with Food Allergies

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**TAKE ALL FOOD ALLERGIES SERIOUSLY •
TRACE AMOUNTS OF FOOD CAN CAUSE A REACTION**

Valentine's Day **at Home**

Valentine's Day is the perfect reason to make time to be together and to show your loved ones how much you care for them. Here are some ways to make Valentine's Day special at home. Be sure to check KFA's Safe Eats™ recipes for great ideas. Check out a few of our favorites below! Remember to check all labels to ensure foods are safe for your child. Be aware that holiday candies may be manufactured in a different facility than their regular-sized versions or may use different ingredients.

Food-related fun: Select ingredients that are safe for your child and add safe red accents, such as fruit, food coloring, candy, marshmallows or sprinkles. You can make a festive pink drink or make heart-shaped pancakes for breakfast.

Make chocolate fondue: Melt allergy-friendly chocolate in the microwave. Cut up pieces of safe foods to dip. Make your own homemade chocolates: Use allergy-friendly chocolate chips. Melt and pour into heart-shaped molds.

Bake a heart-shaped cake: Using a safe cake recipe, make enough batter for two small cakes. Pour half of the batter into a square pan and half into a round pan. When cooled, turn the square cake so it makes a diamond, cut the round cake in half and add these to the top of the diamond to make the shape of a heart. Add safe frosting and decorate.

"Peanut Butter" Cups Recipe

1/4 cup safe margarine
3/4 cup soy or sunflower butter
3/4 cup graham cracker crumbs
1/2 cup powdered sugar
1 1/2 cups safe chocolate chips

Melt together margarine and soy or sunflower butter. Mix together graham cracker crumbs and powdered sugar. Add melted butters and stir to completely blend.

Spread this in the bottom of an 8x8" pan. This will be a fairly thin layer. If you want it thicker, use a smaller pan. Melt chocolate and spread evenly on top of butter mixture.

Allow to cool for at least an hour in the refrigerator. Cut in squares to serve. It's easier to cut if you take it out of the fridge for 10-15 minutes before cutting.

Use substitute versions of ingredients as needed.

Making Time for Family

- ✓ Love notes: During the week before Valentine's Day, have each family member write one thing they love about the family each day and add it to a jar. On Valentine's Day, read each one aloud.
- ✓ Random acts of kindness: Have each person do one nice thing for every family member each day in the week leading up to Valentine's Day. Ideas may include doing a chore for someone, leaving a kind note, or giving a compliment.
- ✓ Have the family go together to the florist or local grocer to choose flowers to make a special arrangement for your home or to give to loved ones.
- ✓ Family photo projects: Do you have many digital photos? Make time to turn special pictures into fun products for the family. Make it into a family project. Decide together which pictures to use and what you will make. There are many photo sites that allow you to create albums, mugs, coasters, blankets, art canvases and other products.
- ✓ Make salt dough handprint keepsakes for your family or to give to loved ones.
- ✓ Have a family game night or movie night.

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For more detailed information and a list of resources, please visit KidsWithFoodAllergies.org.
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Valentine's Day at School

Exchanging Valentines has been a fun tradition in schools for many years. Most of us have fond memories of exchanging Valentines with our friends and classmates. Because Valentine's Day is also associated with chocolate and sweets, it is important to make a plan to ensure that children with food allergies can safely take part in the holiday festivities. If your child's school chooses to celebrate Valentine's Day, here are some tips for ensuring that it is safe and fun for everyone.

Parents: Talk with the teacher in advance about having a safe and inclusive celebration. Start this conversation early and with a written plan. Talk with your child and remind them of your family rules about food. Helpful rules include having your child check with you before eating any food and not sharing foods.

Teachers: Please do not allow children with food allergies to share food. Foods from others may be a source of unintended allergen exposure. The CDC and KFA recommend the use of non-food rewards when possible. The easiest way to ensure all children are safely included at school is to keep Valentine's Day celebrations food-free. This promotes inclusiveness in the classroom. It also decreases the risk that a student could be exposed to an allergen. Celebrating without sugary, high-fat food and sweets is also healthier and consistent with the wellness policies in place in many schools.

Valentine's Rewards, Crafts and Activities

- Exchange Valentine-themed pencils, stickers, pencil sharpeners, and other trinkets. (Look in dollar stores, local pharmacies and big box stores.)
- Allow children to design and create handmade Valentines for classmates, teachers and family using construction paper, paper doilies, glitter, glue, stickers, lace and other craft materials.
- Make paper flowers from tissue paper and pipe cleaners.
- Cut out paper hearts and attach to string to make garland for the classroom.
- Allow children to decorate a mailbox or paper bag to use to collect their Valentines.
- Have the class work together to decorate a bulletin board or the room door for Valentine's Day.
- Create origami hearts.
- Make small heart stamps out of erasers.
- Make friendship bracelets for classmates to share.
- Make little critters from pom-poms, felt, pipe cleaners and googly-eyes.
- Create thumbprint or hand print Valentines.



Fun Ways to Celebrate!

HOST A POETRY READING: Have children write their own original poems and share with the class and invited guests. Children could also choose their favorite quote, poem or reading about love to share.

CLASSROOM SECRET ADMIRERS: Have the children pick names out of a bowl. The week of Valentine's Day, have the children do something nice for the person they chose. On Valentine's Day, have the children see if they can guess who their secret admirer is.

HOST A GAME DAY: Have children bring in games, puzzles, Legos and other activities from home to share in small groups or simply use classroom games.

MAKE A CLASS VALENTINE-THEMED DAY: Do curriculum-related Mad Libs, crossword puzzles, math problems, word searches and writing prompts with a Valentine's Day twist.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For additional ideas on school celebrations, see KFA's list of non-food rewards.

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