Dear Chef:

Hello to all this February, month of Saint Valentine, better known for that specific date, the 14th, when you best not forget to recognize your significant other. The celebration of Valentine's Day may have it roots dating as far back as the Roman Empire and the early Christians. I suspect that for many of you, it means some additional special planning and coordination as you prepare for the increased business.

It is amazing to me how the price of most everything associated with this event increases. Everything from flowers, especially fresh roses, to chocolates will increase in price substantially for a brief time just before the 14th. I make it a habit to try and plan ahead so I'm not stuck with high prices because of last-minute shopping.

Maybe something a bit less traditional would be more appreciated. A word of wisdom to all: I've always been pleasantly surprised how a small "something personally done" will be more appreciated than anything you could purchase at the store. A simple, heartfelt, handwritten note goes a long way. Failing that, you generally can't go wrong with jewelry.

Having said that, please accept this as my personal Valentine to all of you. Even though we may not always agree on everything, I admire who you are while supporting your right to make daily choices, sometimes difficult ones, concerning all things in your life that move you forward in your career and with your family.

We are one month closer to our Western Regional Conference. I hope you are planning to attend, as I greatly look forward to seeing and spending time with all of you in sunny Scottsdale, Ariz. The deadline for great deals on early registration is fast approaching. If you need information, please visit www.acfchefs.org and click on Events/Regional Conferences/Western.
Warmest regards to all. May you be blessed with health and success.

William Franklin, CMC, AAC
Your ACF Western Region Vice President

The History of Valentine's Day

The history of Valentine's Day - and its patron saint - is shrouded in mystery. But we do know that February has long been a month of romance. St. Valentine's Day, as we know it today, contains vestiges of both Christian and ancient Roman tradition. So, who was Saint Valentine and how did he become associated with this ancient rite? Today, the Catholic Church recognizes at least three different saints named Valentine or Valentinus, all of whom were martyred.

One legend contends that Valentine was a priest who served during the third century in Rome. When Emperor Claudius II decided that single men made better soldiers than those with wives and families, he outlawed marriage for young men - his crop of potential soldiers. Valentine, realizing the injustice of the decree, defied Claudius and continued to perform marriages for young lovers in secret. When Valentine's actions were discovered, Claudius ordered that he be put to death.

Other stories suggest that Valentine may have been killed for attempting to help Christians escape harsh Roman prisons where they were often beaten and tortured.

According to one legend, Valentine actually sent the first "valentine" greeting himself. While in prison, it is believed that Valentine fell in love with a young girl - who may have been his jailor's daughter - who visited him during his confinement. Before his death, it is alleged that he wrote her a letter, which he signed "From your Valentine," an expression that is still in use today.

Although the truth behind the Valentine legends is murky, the stories certainly emphasize his appeal as a sympathetic, heroic, and, most importantly, romantic figure. It's no surprise that by the Middle Ages, Valentine was one of the most popular saints in England and France.

While some believe that Valentine's Day is celebrated in the middle of February to commemorate the anniversary of Valentine's death or burial - which probably occurred around 270 A.D - others claim that the Christian church may have decided to celebrate Valentine's feast day in the middle of February in an effort to "christianize" celebrations of the pagan Lupercalia festival. In ancient Rome, February was the official beginning of spring and was considered a time for purification. Houses were ritually cleansed by sweeping them out and then sprinkling salt and a type of wheat called spelt throughout their interiors. Lupercalia, which began at the ides of February, February 15, was a fertility festival dedicated to Faunus, the Roman god of agriculture, as well as to the Roman founders Romulus and Remus.

To begin the festival, members of the Luperci, an order of Roman priests, would gather at the sacred cave where the infants Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome, were believed to have been cared for by a she-wolf or lupa. The priests would then sacrifice a goat, for fertility, and a dog, for purification.

The boys then sliced the goat's hide into strips, dipped them in the sacrificial
blood and took to the streets, gently slapping both women and fields of crops with the goat hide strips. Far from being fearful, Roman women welcomed being touched with the hides because it was believed the strips would make them more fertile in the coming year. Later in the day, according to legend, all the young women in the city would place their names in a big urn. The city's bachelors would then each choose a name out of the urn and become paired for the year with his chosen woman. These matches often ended in marriage. Pope Gelasius declared February 14 St. Valentine's Day around 498 A.D. The Roman “lottery” system for romantic pairing was deemed un-Christian and outlawed. Later, during the Middle Ages, it was commonly believed in France and England that February 14 was the beginning of birds' mating season, which added to the idea that the middle of February - Valentine's Day - should be a day for romance. The oldest known valentine still in existence today was a poem written by Charles, Duke of Orleans to his wife while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London following his capture at the Battle of Agincourt. The greeting, which was written in 1415, is part of the manuscript collection of the British Library in London, England. Several years later, it is believed that King Henry V hired a writer named John Lydgate to compose a valentine note to Catherine of Valois.

In Great Britain, Valentine's Day began to be popularly celebrated around the seventeenth century. By the middle of the eighteenth century, it was common for friends and lovers in all social classes to exchange small tokens of affection or handwritten notes. By the end of the century, printed cards began to replace written letters due to improvements in printing technology. Ready-made cards were an easy way for people to express their emotions in a time when direct expression of one's feelings was discouraged. Cheaper postage rates also contributed to an increase in the popularity of sending Valentine's Day greetings. Americans probably began exchanging handmade valentines in the early 1700s. In the 1840s, Esther A. Howland began to sell the first mass-produced valentines in America.

According to the Greeting Card Association, an estimated one billion valentine cards are sent each year, making Valentine's Day the second largest card-sending holiday of the year. An estimated 2.6 billion cards are sent for Christmas. Approximately 85 percent of all valentines are purchased by women. In addition to the United States, Valentine's Day is celebrated in Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom, France, and Australia.

Valentine greetings were popular as far back as the Middle Ages (written Valentine's didn't begin to appear until after 1400), and the oldest known Valentine card is on display at the British Museum. The first commercial Valentine's Day greeting cards produced in the U.S. were created in the 1840s by Esther A. Howland. Howland, known as the Mother of the Valentine, made elaborate creations with real lace, ribbons and colorful pictures known as “scrap.”

Question of the Month

This month's question of the month is: ACF National provides many services for the local Culinarian. Which service has the greatest impact for you at the local chapter level? Take a minute or two and e-mail me your thoughts. There can be no bad replies. You can e-mail me a single sentence, a bullet point or an in-depth response. I look forward to receiving your responses.
ACF Western Region's "Support ACF Culinary Team USA"  
Be a Part of this Once-In-a-Lifetime Opportunity

ACF Culinary Team USA is well on its way. They took third place overall with gold medals in the hot-food portion and cold-food display at the Villeroy & Boch Culinary World Cup 2010. Their ultimate goal is to win gold at the 2012 "culinary Olympics" in Erfurt, Germany.

These chefs have generously committed their time, energy and passion to represent the United States of America and American cuisine in the international arena. Join the journey and donate to the team, and you could win a trip to see them in action in Erfurt.

ACF Chapter Logos Available

Your ACF chapter logo is now available behind the login on your member profile of the ACF website. You can add your chapter logo on your business cards, letterhead, website and etc. Please read the ACF Branded Chapter Logo Usage and ACF Logo Policies and Procedures documents to ensure you are using the logo correctly. Our goal in every instance of the logo's use is to enhance ACF’s awareness in the culinary industry and with the public.

This Month in History

Historical facts for the month of February from the Library of Congress and U.S. National Archives.

Historical February Dates

Call for Unpublished Works

William Franklin, CMC, AAC, and his team from the ACF Western Region
are calling on all Western Region members to submit unpublished works on a regular basis for inclusion in our e-newsletter, The Standard.

Our e-newsletter is published and distributed to Western Region members monthly, so all materials must be submitted no later than the 25th of each month to be included in the next month's issue. The work can be any length, but ideally no longer than 800 words. Format should be Microsoft Word or PDF. Photos of chapter events with brief descriptions are encouraged.

Published works, regardless of medium, are also requested, but, please, make sure you give credit when and where appropriate and required by all copyright statutes and laws.

Please submit all materials to bill.franklin@us.nestle.com.

Western Region Chapter News
Find out what your ACF Western Region chapters have been doing or are planning by visiting their websites or contacting them.

Alaska
ACF Alaska Culinary Association--www.alaskachefs.com
ACF Midnight Sun Chefs Association--Contact Luis Manuel Martinez, CCC, at mscca-acf@hotmail.com for information.

Arizona
ACF Chefs Association of Southern Arizona--www.acfchefsarizona.org
ACF Chefs Association of Arizona, Inc.--www.acfaz.org
ACF of Northern Arizona--Contact Richard Crowell, CEC, CCA, CDM, at Richard.Crowell@nahealth.com for information.
ACF Prescott Chapter--acfprescott.blogspot.com/

California
ACF California Capitol Chefs Association--www.capitolchefs.org
ACF Channel Islands Chefs Association--Contact Kirk Parks at kirk.parks@marriott.com for information.
ACF Chefs & Culinarians of San Diego--www.acfchefssandiego.com
ACF Chefs de Cuisine Association of California--www.acfla.org
ACF Heart of The Valley--Contact Paul Topping at ptopping@it-email.com for information.
ACF Monterey Bay Chapter--www.montereybaychef.org
ACF Northern California Chefs Association--www.norcalchefs.org
ACF Orange Empire Chefs & Professional Cooks Association--www.oechefs.org
ACF Santa Barbara Chapter--www.sfchefs.org
ACF Santa Barbara Chapter--Contact Randall Dublitz at (805) 965-0581 for information.
ACF Southern California Inland Empire Chefs & Cooks Association--www.IEChefs.org
Chefs de Cuisine Association of Palm Springs--Contact Hugh Duffy at (760) 862-4547 for information.
Chefs de Cuisine Association of San Diego--www.sdchefsdecuisine.com
Chefs de Cuisine of Greater Bakersfield Inc.--Contact Juan Aguirre, CEC, AAC, at (661) 706-3488 for information.
The ACF Chefs Association of San Joaquin Valley--www.sanjoaquinchefs.org
Santa Clara Valley Chapter--Contact Jay Marshall, CEC, AAC, at president@acfsantaclaravalley.com for information.

Colorado
ACF Colorado Chefs Association--www.acfcoloradochefs.org
ACF Pikes Peak Chapter Inc.--www.pikespeakchefs.org

Hawaii
ACF Kona-Kohala Chefs Association--www.konakohalachefs.org

Idaho
ACF Chefs de Cuisine of the Inland Northwest--www.inwchefs.com
ACF Idaho Chefs de Cuisine, Inc.--Contact Alan Turner at
alan.turner@abfoodsusa.com for information.

Montana
ACF Montana Chefs Association--www.acfmontanachefs.org
ACF Rio Grande Valley Chapter: No contact information.

Nevada
ACF Chefs Las Vegas--www.acfchefslasvegas.com
ACF High Sierra Chefs Association--http://acfhsca.net/

Oregon
ACF Bay Area Chefs Association of Oregon--Contact Dan Catanio at
dcatanio@themilicasino.com for information.
ACF Central Oregon High Desert Chapter--
www.highdesertchefs.org
ACF Chefs de Cuisine Society of Oregon--www.acforegonchefs.org
ACF Southern Oregon Chapter--www.acfofso.org

Utah
ACF Beehive Chefs Chapter Inc.--www.acfutahchefs.org

Washington
ACF Northwest Wine Country Chapter--www.northwestwinecountryacf.org

Wyoming
The ACF Greater Yellowstone Chapter--Contact Mike Dean, CEC, at
mdean@xanterra.com for information.