

LOVE

is in the air

With easy-to-make solutions for cards, bouquets and treats, *Kate Farr* looks into celebrating Valentine's Day with the whole family

There's nothing (aside from coffee) that makes the world go round quite as much as love, and February 14 is all about celebrating those warm and fuzzy feelings with the people who touch your heart the very most. And while your pre-kids Valentine's Day routine may have included candlelit dinners, chilled champers and lavish lingerie, it's still possible to embrace that loving feeling with small people in tow.

DIY love letters

It first became customary for lovers to exchange handwritten notes back in the 18th century, when Valentine's cards would be cut into heart-, dove- and cherub-shaped outlines and finished with lace. These days, February 14 sees us showering our loved ones with cards, gifts and even jewellery, and with the rise of the internet, showing our affection has never been easier, with e-cards an increasingly popular way of marking the day.

TOP TIP Encourage children to hand-decorate a card for the person that they love and admire the most – be this a family member,

teacher or friend. Add to the fun by encouraging them to send their message anonymously, leaving the recipient to guess who their secret admirer might be. A fun twist for little ones is to sign their name in invisible ink, (make this at home by blending water with lemon juice), then offering a few cryptic clues as to their true identity. The grand reveal can be achieved by simply holding the paper up to the light.

Say it with flowers

For many an old romantic, Valentine's Day is synonymous with red roses. What you may not know is that your bouquet may hold hidden significance – 50 red roses are said

to symbolise eternal love, 12 are for gratitude, while two bound together represent an engagement. Always count your stems carefully!

But it's not all about the rose, which – especially at this time of year – can be over-priced and hard to find. Hinduism recognises the jasmine flower as a symbol of love, while pink, red and white carnations all carry romantic associations. Meanwhile, here in Hong Kong, our beloved bamboo not only makes for sturdy scaffolding, but also represents resilience and grace, making it a thoughtful component of any Valentine's Day bouquet.

TOP TIP Get kids into some floral fun by making colourful paper bouquets. Cut individual petals, and then use a paper punch to create small holes in the bottom of each one, before threading through a lollipop 'stem' to fasten your flower together. Wrap in brown paper for an authentic florist's feel then let them distribute a little floral sweetness to friends. Alternatively, take a trip to Prince Edward then wander Flower Market Road, allowing the kids to customise their very own bunch of blooms.



Even little kids can get in on the fun



Hand-decorated cards send the right message

Chocolate-box pretty

Eating your feelings needn't always be a bad thing. Packed with tryptophan, a chemical associated with sexual arousal, and phenethylamine, which is released by the brain when you fall in love, chocolate is a known aphrodisiac. There's also the association with sweetness and luxury, all of which stacks up to a towering pile of calories come Valentine's Day.

TOP TIP For a healthier Valentine's treat that doubles up as a fun family activity, try dipping strawberries in melted chocolate before cooling in the fridge. (Alternatively, stock up on Belgian truffles and save them until the kids are asleep).



Chocolate dipped strawberries are a delicious treat

If all that lounging around gives you itchy feet, grab your significant other and hit up Lantau Base Camp's annual Valentine's dash, scheduled for February 11. This 13-kilometre trail run is open to teams of two, and all partners must finish the course à deux, making it a trust, as well as a physical exercise, and a great way to work up a sweat together! **B**

FIND IT

- Auberge's Spa Botanica, www.aubergediscoverybay.com
- LBC Valentines Race, www.lantaubasecamp.com

Couples only

While it's great to share the love with all the family, it's important for busy parents to take time together. Auberge's Spa Botanica is laying on the love throughout February; couples booking a 90-minute signature massage for two will receive a complimentary aroma Jacuzzi bath with their treatment, enabling them to linger a little longer before heading back to reality.

What's in a name?

The origin of Valentine's Day is something of a mystery, as there are actually not one, but three Saint Valentines to be found in the record books, with little known of their lives. The Valentine's Day that we now celebrate was most likely created in the 14th century by the English poet and author, Geoffrey Chaucer. He wrote of the engagement of King Richard II to Anne of Bohemia: "For this was on St Valentine's Day, when every bird cometh there to choose his mate." It was believed during this period that birds would pair for life each year in mid-February, leading to the association with romantic love and partnership that endures to this day.

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