

Go nuts for love this Valentine's Day

What plans do you have to express your love this Valentine's Day? Chocolate, wine, roses, fruits, lingerie or jewelry? How about gifts for the heart from the heart?

The heart is said to be the organ of love and should be protected and nurtured. For a moment, let us consider, how can I take care of my heart and the heart of the one or ones I love? Well, nuts ... raw or roasted; or for the special day, try nuts in a variety of ways. Nuts provide not only a crunch, but are an excellent source of: Protein for growth, giving a longer feeling of fullness - decreasing the feeling of hunger. Healthy fats to reduce Low Density Lipoproteins (LDL) or the bad cholesterol that may cause heart problems. Potassium that controls the rhythm of the heart. Omega-3 fatty acids for healthier flowing of blood. Plant sterols that help to lower cholesterol in the blood. Fibre to make you feel fuller for a longer period of time and help to get rid of unwanted fats in the large intestines. Vitamin E to prevent the formation of plaque in the blood vessels that may cause heart attack or stroke. **HOW MUCH NUTS AND WHICH ONES?** Nuts are naturally high in fats. The good thing is that the type of fat found in nuts is mainly unsaturated and 'heart healthy', and is a better alternative to the saturated fat that tends to increase the risk of heart disease. Nuts should be eaten in moderation, just like all other food items. The recommendation is about one handful or fistful everyday. Oh yes, some persons have big hands and therefore, let me serve caution: one serving is about one ounce. Research has shown that some nuts are better than others because of the amount of fat found in some of them. Personally, all foods should be eaten in moderation, whether the chosen nut is walnut, pistachios, cashews, pecan, almonds or the Jamaican all-time favourite, peanut. **VALENTINE'S DAY SPECIAL TREATS** Chocolate-covered nuts are a tasty treat; the darker the chocolate, the better it is for the heart. Red wine and nuts. As a Jamaican saying goes, 'the darker the berry the sweeter the wine'; but as it relates to wine and heart health, it is not about the sweetness of the wine, but the resveratrol that is found in the red grapes that is used to make red wine. Fruits and nuts ... juicy and delicious and an added crunch for the heart. Variety of nuts ... variety is the spice of life ... "a likkle diss a likkle dat". Peanut in the rice instead of the peas. Peanut porridge or peanut punch to start the day right ... more strength for the body. Peanut or almond drops ... my favourite healthy snacks. Make the day of love a healthy one. Eat and offer nuts to the ones you love! Marsha N. Woolery, RD, is a registered dietitian/nutritionist at Fairview Medical and Dental Centre, Montego Bay, and adjunct lecturer at Northern Caribbean University. Source: Jamaica Gleaner