

*Alumni in action*

# Of food

By Leslie E. Cory, '87 BS, '06 MS

## "There is no love sincerer than the love of food."

—George Bernard Shaw

**W**hen we think about Valentine's Day, most often we envision romantic greeting cards, flowers, Cupid, and large red heart-shaped boxes filled with an array of decadent chocolate, among other things. For many Americans, Valentine's Day also suggests a romantic, candlelit dinner for two. Many of these images stem from a universal belief that certain foods and beverages have properties that enhance romance between two people. These food and beverage items are called "aphrodisiacs," defined by

# and love

Merriam-Webster's Dictionary as a noun: "1. an agent (as a food or drug) that arouses or is held to arouse romantic desire; 2. something that excites." Thus, these particular foods are often coined the "foods of love."

Why certain foods over others? According to GourmetSleuth.com, in ancient times a distinction was made between a substance that increased fertility versus one that simply increased romantic desire. "One of the key issues in early times was nutrition. Food was not as readily available as it is today. It is important to realize these food and drink substances were identified (documented) by the likes of Pliny and Dioscorides (ancient Greeks) in the first century AD and later by Paul of Aegina from

the seventh century." Other foods that historically have been deemed to have these aphrodisiac qualities were derived from mythology. Aphrodite, the goddess of love was said to consider "sparrows" sacred because of their "amorous nature." Sparrows would often be eaten as an aphrodisiac.

As a culinarian and teacher, I maintain that we eat with our eyes first. That which is visually appealing grabs our attention. If food doesn't look good to us we are most likely not going to try it. Cooking and eating food is a feast for the senses—all five of them. We hear steak sizzling on the grill or the hissing of eggs frying on the stove; we

smell the aroma of bread baking in the oven; we feel the delicate fuzz of a ripe peach against our skin; we taste the silkiness of chocolate as it melts in our mouth. According to The Smell and Taste Foundation in Chicago, the mere smell of certain foods can stimulate romantic desire, notably pumpkin pie and buttered popcorn for men and licorice candy like Good & Plenty for women. When all of our senses are being stimulated in this way, what we are eating or drinking can evidently lead to a night of love and romance.

So what's the skinny on how our bodies react to aphrodisiacs? Despite the fact that modern science recognizes a very limited number of aphrodisiacs, HowStuffWorks.com

suggests that a chain reaction begins when we see, hear, feel, think, touch, smell or otherwise encounter something that is romantically stimulating. Additionally, our brains release norepinephrine and dopamine, neurotransmitters that tell our bodies that this is good and pleasurable. According to the FDA, aphrodisiacs have no scientific basis and are simply myth. While this may be true, many people swear by the effects of certain foods. But whether it's something inherent in the food or the power of the mind believing in the food's qualities is something science has been unable to prove.

Researchers have studied chocolate and found that it contains phenylethylamine and serotonin, which are both associated with "feel good" chemicals that occur naturally in our bodies and are released by our brains when we are happy or feeling loving. It is said they produce a euphoric feeling like when we are in love or experience a "runner's high." In other foods, again, it's that they excite many of our senses through a combination of taste, smell, texture and appearance.

Finally, just what are the foods and drinks that are considered to be aphrodisiacs? Surprisingly, many are everyday



items. There are far too many to mention here, however, the following list is a compilation of foods, beverages and spices that have been known as the most common and popular aphrodisiacs throughout history, and why.

**Alcohol** – Lowers inhibitions and increases confidence; however, over-indulgence can kill the mood. Red wine contains antioxidants beneficial to our health.

**Almonds** – A symbol of fertility throughout the ages.

**Asparagus** – Three courses of asparagus were served to 19th-century bridegrooms due to its reputed aphrodisiacal powers.

**Bananas** – They are rich in B vitamins and potassium, needed for sex hormone production.

**Basil** – Said to produce a general sense of well being for body and mind.

**Champagne** – Viewed as “the drink of love.”

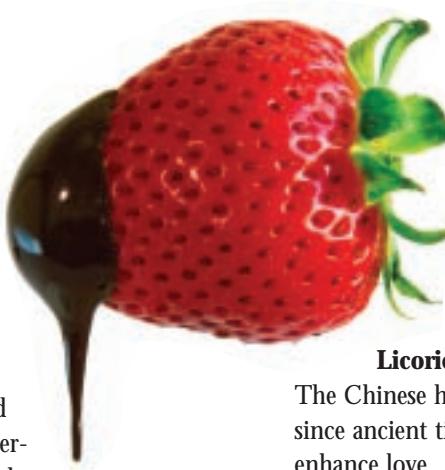
**Chocolate** – The Aztecs referred to it as “nourishment of the Gods.” It contains more antioxidants than red wine. The secret for passion is to combine the two.

**Coriander (cilantro seed)** – The 1,000-year-old book of *Arabian Nights* tells the tale of a merchant who had been childless for 40 years but was cured by a concoction that included coriander.

**Fennel** – In the 1930s fennel was found to be a source of natural plant estrogens. Use of fennel dates back to Egyptian times.

**Garlic** – Long ago, Tibetan monks were not allowed to enter the monastery if they had been eating garlic because of its reputation for stirring up passions. Today, just be sure that both of you are eating it!

**Ginger** – Raw, cooked or crystallized is a



stimulant to the circulatory system. Stir-fry anyone?

**Honey** – Story has it that in medieval times lovers on their honeymoon drank “mead” (wine sweetened with honey) to “sweeten” their marriage.

**Licorice** – Is particularly stimulating to women.

The Chinese have used licorice for medicinal purposes since ancient times. Chewing on bits of licorice is said to enhance love.

**Nutmeg** – Was highly prized by Chinese women as an aphrodisiac.

**Oysters** – Were documented as an aphrodisiac food by the Romans in the second century A.D. Very nutritious and high in protein as is other types of seafood.

**Raspberries and strawberries** – For hand-feeding your lover. High in vitamin C.

In discussions about aphrodisiacs, it is often said that many of these foods are considered to be “finger foods” that stimulate our tactile sense in addition to the pleasure derived from hand feeding a partner.

We have all heard the old adage that “the way to one’s heart is through their stomach.” So take heed. There is no food that tastes as good as food prepared by loving hands.

Dim the lights, put on some soothing music and light a fire in the fireplace. Make sure your cell phones are off and the champagne is chilled.

If cooking isn’t your thing, then make reservations! Just make sure to include aphrodisiacs in your food selections that evening.

Cooking and eating aphrodisiacs suggest the promise of a night of romance. Bon appétit! ■

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*Author Leslie E. Cory is assistant professor in the NMU hospitality management program.*





# A Legacy in Jewelry

By Rebecca Tavernini

“Nothing lends itself so readily to the form of a gift as jewelry—high-grade jewelry. When it is of lasting quality, it serves to remind us of the present long after some other gift might be forgotten. It is never out of place and always appropriate.” So said William Lambrecht in 1906. And indeed it was the passage of time and fine jewelry that defined his life, and would be his legacy to future generations.

Fourteen years before that, he and his family had left the Black Forest of Germany, where they crafted cuckoo clocks, and emigrated to Chicago. Continuing in the time-telling tradition, he opened a “watches and jewelry” business, which became known as “The Big Jewelry Store” because it was the largest jewelry store outside the downtown “loop” area of Chicago.

Today his great-grandchildren, **Matthew Lambrecht '84** and his sister, Beth, run Lambrecht's Jewelers,



William Lambrecht in The Big Jewelry Store

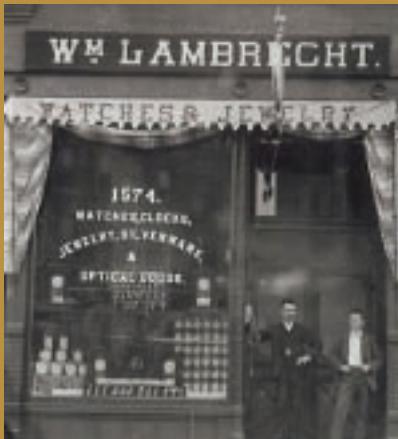
now located in Wilmette, Ill. They bring the same passion to it as their great-grandfather, grandfather, grandmother and father had. “I love this business because jewelry is purchased to mark some major life event,” says Matt. “Jewelry is a very emotional purchase. It is usually bought to mark a special occasion, such as an engagement, an anniversary, a birthday or

the birth of a child. It gives me great pleasure to be part of my customers’ special events. Beth and I are waiting on a lot of the children of my father’s customers.”

“Things have changed a lot over the years,” explains Lambrecht. “The advent of the quartz watch, technology in synthetic gemstones and color enhancements of precious stones have advanced.” The Internet has changed the way jewelry is purchased as well, with many younger people buying from online stores.

“Trends always come and go. Charm bracelets, which were very popular in the ‘50s have been selling really well again; with our charm business up 100 percent from last year. Tin Cup necklaces (which feature beads, usually pearls, knotted at even intervals and are named for the necklace Rene Russo wore in the movie *Tin Cup*) are also popular.

“White gold and platinum have really come back into vogue in recent



*The original store in Chicago and the current one in Wilmette, Ill., run by the fourth generation.*

years... although the trend is starting to lean back toward yellow gold."

On the other hand, some things remain the same. "Diamonds and pearls are always in style," Lambrecht reports. "And the classic, tailored looks always sell: pearl stud earrings, pearl strands, add-a-pearl necklaces, diamond studs and three-stone diamond jewelry." Lambrecht's sister does a lot of custom design work, turning customers' heirlooms or "dated" jewelry from the 1970s into updated pieces.

**"It was said that the ring finger on the left hand had a vein that traveled straight to the heart, which is why we wear our wedding and engagements rings on that finger."**

As for engagement ring purchases, he says typically it used to be the male who would come in and shop for the ring. Now, it is usually a joint purchase. Traditional styles, like a plain band and diamond solitaire engagement ring, remain favorites.

Lambrecht, who's a registered jeweler, trained by the Gemological Institute of America and an American Gem Society member, enjoys educating his customers on what they're buying and the traditions behind the jewelry. For instance, he explains, "It was said that the ring finger on the

left hand had a vein that traveled straight to the heart, which is why we wear our wedding and engagement rings on that finger."

One fellow who was killed in the 1929 St. Valentine's Day Massacre in Chicago was apparently planning to test that theory. He had a ring box in his pocket from Lambrecht's. "The Feds had to come and question my great-grandfather about that."

Another revolving trend is the ups and downs of the economy. "Ours is a luxury purchase so people

tend to cut these out in rough times. We still do a lot of repair work, battery replacements and appraisal work, which all keep us going." He adds, "Obviously we have survived several economic downturns, including the Great Depression."

Every year, there's a spike in business on April 15, after taxes are filed. Surprisingly, Valentine's Day isn't necessarily a big jewelry day, being more about candy and flowers, he says. For Mother's Day, a popular day for giving jewelry, the store usually runs an attention-getting ad

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for necklaces: "For every time she's wanted to wring your neck—why not ring hers?"

Lambrecht finds a fairly steady business from women year-round. "Women have the mentality that they'll buy jewelry for themselves, and usually very nice pieces. Widows will often say, 'If my husband were alive he'd buy this for me.'"

Lambrecht notes that while clothes may go out of fashion in a season, a purchase of classic jewelry will carry through the times. However, he never encourages people to buy jewelry as an investment. "You just don't know what is going to happen with market prices, etc. For the most part, it does retain its value and usually increases." He advises instead to buy something because you or the recipient will love it.

Watches are another "timeless" gift. "The advent of the quartz watch has made them so affordable that today people frequently own more than one wristwatch," which was rare in the past.

"The Big Jewelry Store had several watchmakers, clockmakers and bench jewelers on the premises," recalls Lambrecht. Interestingly, optometrists were also part of the jewelry industry back then. "Frames for glasses were made from precious

metals and jewelers had the grinding techniques needed due to the manufacture of watch crystals."

Lambrecht adds than when someone would purchase a pocket watch, they would buy a movement as one purchase and then go to another display to select a case in which to house the movement.

One of his father's first jobs at the original store, at the intersection of Milwaukee and Western avenues, involved climbing under the sidewalk to wind the giant, iron street clock that was a landmark on Milwaukee Avenue and marked the store's location.

It was only appropriate, as Lambrecht's grandfather had once gone around every week to wind all of the regulator clocks hanging in the Loop elevated stations, which The Big Jewelry Store had provided to the transit system.

Due to changes in the old German neighborhood at Milwaukee and Western (including removal of

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the landmark sidewalk clock in order to widen the street), it was decided in 1966 to close The Big Jewelry Store and move everything to Wilmette.

Today, a large clock from the original store that dates back to 1892 greets customers at the doorway to the Wilmette store.

Carrying on the family business with his sister is not exactly what Lambrecht thought he would be doing when he came to Northern Michigan University to study furniture design. "But after a year of that I decided cutting dovetails all day wasn't for me. I stayed at the urging of my mother and studied general courses." After leaving NMU

he worked in retail. A woman who worked for his father retired and Matt started at the jewelry store.

"Although I didn't finish my college education I have to say that my time at NMU was so well worth it. I met lifelong friends and we still get together on a relatively regular basis 25 years later."

He and his sister continue another family tradition. They have both been president of the Wilmette Chamber of Commerce (Matt twice), as was their father. They have all been active in other community organizations, too. "Giving back to the community is a key part of running and owning your own business," says Lambrecht.

Just as his family has for 117 years, they no doubt will continue to share in the celebrations of their neighbors—as long as clocks are needed and people keep falling in love. ■

## Smart Gifts for Ladies

Bar Pins  
Boudoir Clocks  
Bouquet Holders  
Bracelets  
Cameo Brooches  
Casseroles  
Chafing Dishes  
Collar Pins  
Coral Rings  
Cut Glass  
Diamond Rings  
Dress Pin Sets  
Ear Studs  
Eye Glass Chains  
Flower Vases

Gold Beads  
Gold Crosses  
Gold Lockets  
Gold Watches  
Jewel Cases  
La Vallieres  
Lingerie Clasps  
Link Buttons  
Lorgnettes  
Manicure Sets  
Mesh Bags  
Neck Chains  
Opera Glasses  
Pearl Rings  
Pendants

Photo Frames  
Platinum Brooch  
Sautoirs  
Set Rings  
Signet Rings  
Silk Umbrellas  
Silver Novelties  
Souvenir Spoons  
Stone Rings  
Toilet Sets  
Thimbles  
Traveling Sets  
Veil Pins  
Waist Sets  
Wrist Watches

## Correct Gifts for Men

Ash Receivers  
Bottle Openers  
Cigar Cases  
Cigar Cutters  
Cigar Holders  
Cigar Jars  
Cigarette Cases  
Cloth Brushes  
Collar Buttons  
Cuff Links  
Desk Clocks  
Diamond Links  
Diamond Rings  
Diamond Studs  
Emblem Buttons

Emblem Rings  
Fountain Pens  
Full Dress Sets  
Game Shears  
Gold Lockets  
Gold Watches  
Gruen Watches  
Hat Brushes  
Key Chains  
Lapel Chains  
Match Boxes  
Monogram Buckles  
Monogram Charms

Photo Cases  
Pocket Watches  
Safety Razors  
Scarf Pins  
Shaving Sets  
Signet Rings  
Silk Umbrellas  
Soap Boxes  
Smoking Sets  
Strap Watches  
Tie Clasps  
Toilet Articles  
Vest Chains  
Watch Fobs  
Waldemar Chains