

# Romancing the Fork — A Meal You'll Love Over and Over Again



KP Cooks

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Valentine's Day is fast approaching and the need to do something special for the person that adds light into your life can be overwhelming. You love them, and every year you feel like you must represent that love and devotion with a gift. What gift could possibly represent all that you feel for them?

Flowers, candy, jewelry, a fancy dinner out; some overdone and some straining the budget. Going out to dinner around here means traveling off the peninsula to join the hordes in Gig Harbor to have a not-so-intimate dinner.

One thing that is always appreciated is an intimate dinner for two. There is something sensually primal about creating food that enlivens the tastebuds of the one you love. When the bite melts into your mouth and you release a small moan, savoring all the flavors. Romance can live on the tines of a fork.

You might scoff as you say, "I'm not a cook, so I can't pull off romance on a fork." Let me reassure you, you can.

This meal is easy, elegant and unique. The meat and potatoes are the easy part. And since most of this meal can be done in advance, it relieves a lot of the stress. The Thai garlic sauce that brings it all together is boldly unique and can be done the day before and reheated.

## Steak and Garlic Sauce

Combine in a medium sauceman:

- ½ cup fresh garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons Thai chilies or other spicy pepper like habanero or jalapeño
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 tablespoon fresh squeezed lime juice
- 1 tablespoon lime zest
- 2 tablespoons tamarind water or a 1-inch nub of tamarind (sold in blocks of pulp) simmered in 1 cup water until it cooks down to ½ cup of tamarind water. Toss out the nub of tamarind.
- 1 can of coconut milk

Heat together and reduce by half on medium heat. Make a slurry with 2 tablespoons cornstarch mixed with 4 tablespoons water. Add to sauce with ½ cup of dry cooking sherry. Stir in and cook for 5 minutes. Blend with an immersion blender or cool slightly and blend in a blender. Reheat and add a pat of butter.

For the beef, a filet mignon requires no trimming and comes in the perfect serving size. You can also use a ribeye steak (cutting out the tender circle in the middle of the steak, reserving the outer lip for another meal). If you are serving a group, use a beef tenderloin, allowing 1½ to 2 inches of steak width per person.

Order your filet mignon or tenderloin two weeks in advance from your local butcher. Pick up your meat one week in advance so you can cure it. Remove the plastic wrapping and put your meat on a rack, so air can flow around it. The tenderloin needs to be trimmed of fat and sinew, leaving a nice tender cylinder, and then cut into steaks. Sprinkle it with kosher salt and put it in the fridge

uncovered. After three days, flip the meat and salt the other side. Pull out the beef one hour before cooking to bring to room temp. Trim any hard dry spots.

To cook the beef, heat a cast iron skillet to medium high heat. Once hot, sprinkle salt in the dry pan and sear the beef for two minutes on each side, then put the whole pan in a 415-degree oven for 5 to 7 minutes for medium rare, or an internal temp of 125 degrees. Allow the meat to rest for five to 10 minutes before serving.

## Crispy Mashed Potatoes

For the potatoes, I like to use Yukon Gold. Cut the larger potatoes into chunks. Boil them in salted water until tender. Drain the water and mash potatoes with salt, pepper and 4 tablespoons of butter. Mash in ¼ to ½ cup of sour cream, depending on the amount of potatoes. Taste to adjust the seasoning.

Line a cookie sheet with foil and spray with cooking oil. Spread potatoes on the sheet and cover with plastic and put in the fridge. This can be done in advance. Pull out potatoes 30 minutes before cooking to bring to room temp. Place in a 425-degree preheated oven and bake for 20 to 30 minutes until golden brown.

To serve, add a puddle of garlic sauce to one side of the plate. Add your potatoes and steak on top of the sauce and add your favorite steamed vegetable to accompany your meal. Drizzle with more sauce.