

A romantic dinner table setting featuring a vibrant red rose in a glass vase, silverware neatly placed on a white napkin, and a white plate. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the table and a glass. The overall atmosphere is elegant and intimate.

# Date Night In

Create a Romantic Three Course  
Dinner at Home

## Welcome

Welcome to the creation of your ultimate date night, sharing a meal together is one of the most ancient traditions of every civilization and culture around the world and throughout history. Romance and food are intimately entwined whether it's to cherish a new love or someone who's already sharing your life.

If this is the first time that you've prepared a special dinner for a partner, you may be feeling a little apprehensive – maybe even downright terrified! Don't worry, that's natural, and it's all a part of putting yourself out there. What I want you to keep in mind as you read this eBook and begin to plan your evening is that everything you are going to do is how you feel about this special someone.

What I mean is that the very act of thinking about cooking a special dinner for your partner and sharing these tastes together is an act of love. I've created recipes and instructions, so you have the very best chance of hitting it out of the park. But, regardless of the outcome, if everything that you do is pure love in your heart then your partner will love you in return. Celebrate your successes together and laugh about everything else!

With that said, let's get down to business!

## Planning your Dinner

A successful dinner begins long before the first dish is served. I'm going to let you in on some secrets that served me well as a chef, a wedding planner and the owner of an award-winning restaurant. Together, we'll make sure that you create the perfect atmosphere and environment for your dinner date.

### Secret #1 – Anticipation

Anticipation is the secret sauce that makes any occasion special, and a little mystery adds even more spice. We all have this burning need to know what will happen next and, with just a tiny teaser, you can take advantage of this.

### **An invitation!**

Make it fun and playful and include just a little dash of mystery. Your partner will know that *something* is happening, they just won't know the details.

It's up to you whether you add a theme or dress code. If you think about your partner (depending on how well you know them) and something springs to mind that won't make life too difficult, then go for it. Let your imagination go wild and be playful but don't put yourself under pressure here. The invitation itself will do all the heavy lifting for you.

You can write out your invitation on a card or make something more sophisticated – whatever works for you. There's a great application online at [canva.com](https://www.canva.com) that can help you create graphics like a pro – you can even upload background images

Here's one I created on Canva!



## Secret #2 – Atmosphere

On that evening, you want them the environment to set the tone for your special dinner. Think of your five senses, and you can't go wrong. Here's a list of things you can do?

### The look

Use warm, soft lighting to set the visual mood and lower other lights around the house to create an area of focus. Candles are great for mood lighting but make sure you don't use anything too strongly scented as this will interfere with the aromas of your delicious food!

### Sound

Play music that is suited to you and your partner and the occasion. Music is a great way to keep outside noises and sounds at bay, but you want to ensure that your background music stays in the background so that you can easily have a conversation.

If you're on Spotify, see my Spotify Playlist "Just Love" if you haven't got something that is already special to the two of you.

### Feel

Make a comfortable space for pre-dinner drinks if you want to, and you have time. If you have the option, make sure that the temperature in the room is not too hot or too cold.

### Scents

You want clean and fairly neutral scents in your room. Remember, intense scents such as candles or incense will overpower the aromas of the food you are preparing so if you are going to use anything, keep it subtle and, preferably, away from the dining area. Most of the 'taste' of your food is actually due to your sense of smell, so it's important to reserve this sense for its most vital role in the evening!

### Tastes

If you enjoy alcohol, you can warm up your taste buds with some champagne, wine or pre-dinner cocktails. See my Pinterest Board "Cocktails to Surprise" if you need ideas. A word of warning on cocktails ... the creamy ones can be quite filling so be careful not to fill up too much before your dinner.

It's also great to have some filtered or sparkling water on hand and to serve with the meal. Water is a great palate cleanser between courses, and it will help to reset your taste buds for the next course.

### Secret #3 – Creating the magic

The dining room is the centre of your evening and setting up this space will help to create the impression that this is, indeed, a special occasion.

If you can, set the table and arrange it with everything you need for the night:

1. Tablecloth (preferably white)
2. Flowers
3. Candles (unscented)
4. Cutlery laid out
5. Side plates
6. Napkins (linen or good quality paper napkins)
7. Champagne, wine, and water glasses

Organize the plates that you will be serving each course on. White plates are the best choice if you have them so that the food stands out the most.

### Secret #4 – Be prepared

Nothing flusters you more than rushing around at the last minute to make everything 'just right.' Prepare as much as you can before the night. Ladies - make sure that you know what you are going to wear for the evening! Three changes of outfit five minutes before you need to serve the first course, won't create the calm and relaxed feeling we're going for here.

To help you prepare, I've created a checklist below.

## Date Night Checklist

### Things to Do

- Clean and tidy the house if required.
- Choose your outfit for the evening.
- Arrange the room or rooms the way you like them.
- Prepare all food preparation as well in advance as you can.

### Things to Buy

- Groceries (see the shopping list following the menu).
- Plates, glasses, and tablecloth or quality placemats
- Candles lightly scented or not scented
- Flowers for the table
- Wine and or champagne or drinks that will complement the dinner.
- Pre-dinner cocktail see my Pinterest Board “Cocktails To Surprise” for ideas
- Bottled still or sparkling water.

### Secret #5 – Project confidence

Remember what I said at the beginning. Planning this dinner is for love, so know in your heart of hearts that this is okay and that the world will not end if everything doesn't go to plan. Take comfort from the fact that your partner doesn't have a clue what you planned anyway and this evening is all about making them feel special.

Keep that in mind, and you can't possibly fail.

Good luck and, most importantly, have fun.

# Shopping list

## Pantry Staples

Extra-virgin olive oil or grapeseed oil  
Sea Salt  
Cracked black pepper  
Honey  
Caster (superfine) sugar  
Powdered Gelatine  
1 egg

## Fruit and Vegetables

1 bunch shallots (scallions)  
1 long red chilli  
1 bunch chives  
1 bunch coriander (cilantro)  
2 continental cucumber (English)  
3 limes  
3 oranges  
1 nob ginger  
120g mesclun leaves  
1 punnet red cherry tomatoes  
1 bunch black grapes  
1 fresh fennel (150g)  
1 punnet raspberries

## Meat

2 large duck Breasts

## General Groceries

140g crab meat  
1 jar Dijon mustard  
1 packet panko breadcrumbs  
1 plain aioli or mayonnaise  
1 packet star anise  
1 light soy sauce  
1 cup (250ml) chicken stock  
1 avocado oil\* optional  
1 balsamic vinegar  
70g white chocolate, good quality  
1 cup (250ml) thickened cream

# Menu

*To begin, an irresistible bite of fresh crab infused with flavours of chilli, lime, and zesty aioli. Then, indulge in a tender roast duck breast salad with fresh green leaves, grapes, aromatic fennel and topped with a citrus and ginger dressing. For dessert, a silky smooth white chocolate panna cotta with a hint of lime and heavenly raspberries.*

## Starter

*Chili Crab Cakes with Cucumber,  
Chives & Lime Aioli*

## Main Course

*Roast Duck Salad with Grapes, Fennel & Orange,  
Ginger Dressing*

## Dessert

*White Chocolate Panna Cotta with Raspberries*



## Chili Crab Cakes with Cucumber, Chives, and Lime Aioli

(This recipe can be made the day before up to step 2)

**Serves 2**

### Ingredients

¾ cup (140g) crabmeat\*  
¼ cup shallots (scallions), finely chopped  
2 teaspoons red chilli, finely chopped\*  
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard  
½ cup panko breadcrumbs\* (Japanese breadcrumbs) + extra  
1 egg white  
2 limes, 1 juiced + 1 cut wedges for garnish

Extra-virgin olive oil  
Sea salt & cracked pepper  
1 continental cucumber (English), 12 thin slices  
Coriander (cilantro) for garnish  
Chive & Lime Aioli  
½ cup plain aioli or mayonnaise (store-bought)\*  
1 teaspoon chives, finely chopped + extra for garnish  
Squeeze lime juice

### Method

1. In a bowl combine crabmeat, shallots (scallions), chilli, Dijon mustard, panko breadcrumbs, egg white and 1 tablespoon lime juice, mix well. Season with salt and pepper and add extra panko breadcrumbs if the mixture is too wet. Form 6 small patties and place in the fridge for at least 20 minutes or overnight.
2. For the chive and lime aioli, mix all ingredients together and set aside.
3. In a non-stick pan, heat a little olive oil over medium to high heat. Cook crab cakes for 2-3 minutes on each side or until golden brown. Place on paper towel to drain any excess oil before serving.

### To Serve

On 2 serving plates, spoon 3 dollops of aioli evenly on each plate and place a crab cake on top of the aioli. Place 2 x 3 slices of cucumber in between the crab cakes on each plate and top them with coriander (cilantro). Garnish with 2 lime wedges in the centre and scatter with extra chives and serve.

### Chefs Tips

\*Pre-prepared crabmeat can be found at supermarkets, gourmet food stores, and fish markets. Panko breadcrumbs can be found in the Asian aisle of supermarkets. Add more chilli if you like it hot, and you can substitute crab for coarsely chopped white fish if desired.



## Roast Duck Salad with Grapes, Fennel & Orange, Ginger Dressing

(Duck breasts can marinade overnight)

**Serves 2**

### Ingredients

2 large duck breasts  
1 tablespoon grapeseed oil or extra-virgin olive oil  
2 pieces orange rind  
2-star anise  
1 tablespoon ginger, crushed  
¼ cup (60ml) orange juice  
2 tablespoons light soy sauce  
1 cup (250ml) chicken stock  
Sea salt & cracked pepper

### Salad

120g mesclun leaves  
10 red cherry tomatoes, halved  
1 continental cucumber (English), peeled sides\*  
12 black grapes, halved  
150g fennel, thinly sliced + fronds for garnish  
2 oranges, segmented + juice reserved

### Orange & Ginger Dressing

¼ cup (60ml) reserved orange juice  
1 tablespoon grapeseed oil or avocado oil  
1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar  
1 teaspoon ginger, crushed  
1 teaspoon honey

### Method

1. For the marinade, in a bowl add olive oil, orange rind, star anise, ginger, orange juice, soy sauce, and chicken stock. Add duck breast to the marinade, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 3 hours or overnight.
2. For salad dressing, whisk all ingredients together, season to taste, set aside.
3. For the salad prep all ingredients and set aside.
4. Preheat oven to 200°C (390°F). Pat duck breasts dry with paper towel, score skin and season with salt. Place duck breast, skin-side down in a cold pan (no oil) over medium-high heat for 4-5 minutes, (this will render the fat on the duck breast). Turn duck over, season with salt and pepper and seal the other side 2-3 minutes then place on baking tray and cook for about 10 -12 minutes in the oven, (the breast should be just bouncy to touch on the underside when cooked). Remove from the oven and allow the duck breast to rest 5-6 minutes to retain the juices. Slice duck at an angle ready to serve.

### To Serve

On 2 serving plates arrange the salad the following way, start with the mesclun leaves in the middle of the plate. Divide and arrange the tomatoes, cucumber, grapes, fennel and orange segments, in around the salad, making sure the different colours are evenly placed. Arrange sliced duck throughout the salad, drizzle a little of the dressing over the duck slices. Garnish with fennel fronds and serve.

### Chefs Tips

\*Peel the cucumber with a vegetable peeler, using just the sides not going through to the seed part.



## White Chocolate Panna Cotta with Raspberries

(This recipe can be made the day before)

**Serves 2**

### Ingredients

1 cup (250ml) thickened cream  
70g premium white chocolate, chopped  
1 tablespoon caster (superfine) sugar  
1 teaspoon powdered gelatine  
2 lime zest pieces  
1 punnet fresh raspberries

### Method

1. For the panna cotta, place cream, sugar and lime zest in a saucepan over medium heat, bring to boil then remove from heat. Add chocolate and let stand for a few minutes while chocolate melts, stir to combine. Soak the gelatine in a little boiling water until soft, pour into the cream mixture and stir, strain through a fine sieve and set aside to cool.
2. Pour panna cotta evenly into 2 serving glasses, cover and chill for at least 6 hours or overnight.

### To Serve

Top panna cotta with fresh raspberries and serve. (If the panna cotta was made the day before, let it reach room temperature before serving).



### More Information

I am always developing new recipes that I create in my kitchen at home. If you have enjoyed this date night and the menu, you can visit my website below, and follow me on my social media platforms for exciting recipe ideas.

You can also subscribe to my monthly newsletter to receive exclusive recipes for two, recipes for entertaining, menu ideas, tips and more!

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Thank you so much and enjoy!

Kim x