

February 14

ST. VALENTINE

Valentine is the patron saint for lovers and sweethearts. Although there were at least seven saints named Valentine, there is only one commemorated on February 14. A number of stories are found in various "acta," or acts, about this third-century Roman martyr named Valentinus. One tells of a young priest, jailed for refusing to renounce his Christian faith, who sent messages to his loved ones from his jail cell via a friendly dove.

The Duke of Orleans is credited with making the first valentine card in 1415. He wrote love poems to his wife in France while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London. Valentine cards became enormously popular in the U.S. during the Civil War, shortly followed by gifts of chocolate, flowers, and jewelry. To this day, St. Valentine is honored as a patron for lovers and sweethearts. For Catholics, he remains a symbol not only of our love for one another, but of the love between God and man.

Red Velvet Valentine's Cake

- ½ c. shortening
- 1½ c. sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 tsp. butter flavor
- 3 tbsp. cocoa
- 1 oz. red food color
- 2½ c. cake flour
- 1 c. buttermilk

- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tbsp. vinegar
- 1 tsp. baking soda

Cream shortening, sugar, eggs, and flavors. Make a paste of cocoa and food coloring. Add to first mixture. Alternately add flour and buttermilk. Mix baking soda and vinegar in small bowl. Add to batter. Blend. Pour into three 9-inch greased cake pans, preferably heart-shaped. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes. Frost when cool.

Frosting

- 3 tbsp. flour
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 c. milk
- 1 c. shortening
- 1 c. sugar
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- ¼ tsp. butter flavor

Cook milk, flour, and salt until very thick, about the consistency of cooled pudding, stirring con-

stantly. Let cool thoroughly. Cream shortening and sugar, adding flavors. Combine with the first mixture. Beat well. Frost between layers and on top, letting icing drip down sides.

The uneven texture of this light, buttery frosting evokes the idea of antique lace over the red velvet cake. Or frost with any plain white icing of your choice.

— Verna Burke