

# The Mandolin

St. Francis Catholic High School

February 2025

"Spread the word."

Issue 131



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# Black History Month at St. Francis

BY SOPHIA HENDRIX '25

It's that time of year again where I will be wrapping up the upcoming events for Black History Month; this time being my final time doing so. Now, before we feel sentimental, what is Black History Month at St. Francis going to look like this year?

The national Black History Month theme of 2025 is, "African Americans and Labor," which intends on celebrating the immense impact African Americans have in fields of work.



PROTESTORS FROM THE UNITED PACKINGHOUSE WORKERS UNION AGAINST THE W.W PICKLE COMPANY, DATE UNKNOWN  
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE UNITED FOOD AND COMMERCIAL INTERNATIONAL WORKERS UNION

While we believe in the importance of highlighting the work of Black Americans across the nation, we decided to look at the theme through a different lens when sharing it with St. Francis. Rather than looking at African Americans in labor, we decided to focus on African Americans who have persisted over the decades. Our Black Student Union (BSU) President and council members have been

putting large amounts of time into the anticipated assembly, which will feature surprise performances and guests. Not only can our campus look forward to the assembly, but we also have events throughout the month lined up, which includes a movie night on February 28th for students to close out the month.

While BSU will be left in good hands, it's an emotional time for us seniors on council who are wrapping up our time here in this community. I know for me personally, BSU served as the first place on campus where I felt like I belonged.



SENIOR SOPHIA HENDRIX SPEAKING AT LAST YEAR'S BLACK HISTORY MONTH ASSEMBLY, 2024  
PHOTO COURTESY OF SFHS\_TROUBIES ON INSTAGRAM

There's nothing that could replicate the feeling of walking into this club for the first time my freshman year and being with girls to whom I could relate. I am thankful for everyone I've met through this community and I am beyond thankful that I could be a part of this beautiful council with people who mean so much to me.

# Black History Month at St. Francis cont'd

I interviewed my cousin and best friend Selah Burnley to hear her feelings towards this last month. Burnley says, “This being my last Black History Month with St. Francis is so bittersweet because I love to see where the school started versus where the school ended. I feel more like a part of a community than ever during this month. My goal is always to leave an impact. Again, the work that the BSU council puts in pays off because it leads to this campus being more inclusive and educated. Seeing my peers learn more about their sisters and themselves is all I could ever ask for. I don’t wish the process was any different because the process leads to progress.”

Reflecting on the progression of Black History Month at St. Francis, I could not be more proud of the work that's been done. Our community has come such a long way, and although there is always more to learn and understand, I can leave knowing that a step forward has been made. My love letter to BSU, my documentary called Caged Bird, is hoping to premiere this spring and I invite all of the St. Francis community to hear our story documented over the course of four years. With all that being said, it's bittersweet to wrap up one last article, but for now, this is your BSU Publicist saying: See you later St. Francis.

## The Puzzle Project

BY KATIE KOO '26

Have you ever gotten bored in class and decided to take a brain break by hopping on The New York Times' puzzle games, Wordle, The Mini, Strands and my personal favorite, Connections? Well, studies show that activities such as puzzle-solving or coloring not only have the ability to help improve your mood but your memory as well (don't use this statistic to justify why you are playing Wordle instead of doing your homework). One new service club on the rise at St. Francis, The Puzzle Project, is geared toward providing screenless activities in the form of care bundles to those in need. These bundles may consist of homemade booklets containing fun puzzles mimicking The New York Times' games, handwritten letters and tie-knot blankets.



THREE LEADERS OF THE PUZZLE PROJECT OUTSIDE OF A HOSPITAL

PHOTO COURTESY OF KATIE KOO



## The Puzzle Project cont'd

Junior Elizabeth Koo says, "It is not recognized enough that those who are confined by their medical conditions have limited entertainment options; excessive screen media is what they must resort to." On Saturday, January 11th, The Puzzle Project was able to visit the kids at Saint John's Program for Real Change and donate many care packages. Members of the club played games with the kids such as red light green light, tag and musical chairs. The kids loved the puzzles and jokes. The event was so successful they stayed an extra thirty minutes with the kids. Recently, this club was also able to donate 20 care bundles to Kaiser Permanente's Women and Children medical center on Tuesday, January 7th. If you are interested in giving back to the community and providing fun games to the less fortunate, check your emails for The Puzzle Project's next meeting to make more puzzles and blankets!



CARE PACKAGES MADE BY PUZZLE PROJECT MEMBERS!

PHOTO COURTESY OF KATIE KOO

## Women Athletes Elevate Mental Health Awareness

BY MERCY COLLIER '26

The life of a high school or college athlete is a constant balancing act. Athletes must navigate the stress of their academic responsibilities while juggling demanding practice schedules and the pressure of high-stakes competitions. The constant grind can take a serious toll on athletes' mental well-being.

Many high school athletes also play club or additional sports in the off season, leaving little time to recharge. But in sports culture, where "mental toughness"

is a constant mantra, athletes often feel pressured to hide their struggles.

In 2017, former USC Division 1 volleyball player Victoria Garrick Browne bravely came forward to talk about her mental health battles as a college athlete. In a [TEDx Talk that went viral](#), Browne shined a much-needed light on the pressure athletes face and shared her experiences with anxiety, the development of an eating disorder and depression.

"[B]ecause I didn't think I could have any of these illnesses because I was an athlete,



# Women Athletes Elevate Mental Health Awareness cont'd

I battled depression for half a year without even knowing I was,” Browne told the audience. “Being part of this culture makes it so hard for athletes to differentiate between what is hard work and what is pushing yourself too far.”

That’s why Browne founded [The Hidden Opponent](#), a nonprofit dedicated to raising awareness about student-athlete mental health. The organization provides resources to players and coaches, and promotes public awareness campaigns to help break the stigma surrounding mental health in sports.



VICTORIA GARRICK BROWNE (LEFT) PROMOTES THE HIDDEN OPPONENT COLLABORATION WITH ADIDAS

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE HIDDEN OPPONENT

A key part of that effort is their Campus Captain program, with more than 900 student-athletes serving as mental health advocates on over 750 college and high school campuses nationwide.

“When an athlete has an invisible injury or as I like to call the hidden opponent, people can’t see it,” Browne said in a 2023 interview. “It’s very hard to identify even for yourself and to know when you do need to take that step back and treat it differently.”

Browne isn’t the only female athlete sounding the alarm about mental health. In June, 2021, tennis champion Naomi Osaka withdrew from the French Open and Wimbledon to focus on her mental health. She revealed on social media that she “suffered long bouts of depression” and battled anxiety. The next month, Olympic gymnast Simone Biles made headlines when she withdrew from the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, which had been delayed due the COVID pandemic.

Biles explained that she made her decision due to anxiety and mental blocks that were putting her safety at risk during competition. Both athletes faced intense criticism for stepping back from such major events, but bravely leveraged the attention to advocate for mental health.

At St. Francis Catholic High School, supporting student athletes’ mental health is a priority. More than 380 female athletes – around half the student body – participate in one or more of the school’s 23 teams across 13 sports. Kym Weinandy, director of the on-campus Wellness Center at St. Francis, emphasizes the importance of balancing mental and physical health. She says athletes recovering from injuries often experience a significant level of anxiety and even depression.

“[Self-care] and addressing any mental health concerns is vital to overall well-being,” Weinandy said. “If athletes don’t address these needs it can significantly affect their ability to perform at their best in their sport. It can also put them more at risk for injuries that disrupt their athletic career.”

# Women Athletes Elevate Mental Health Awareness cont'd

To address these challenges, the Wellness Center provides confidential counseling services for common issues like academic stress, anxiety, depression, body image, and resiliency. In addition, the school's Guardian Angels Peer Team, a specially trained group



MEMBERS OF THE GUARDIAN ANGEL PEER TEAM AT A SCHOOL-WIDE ASSEMBLY  
PHOTO COURTESY OF SFHS\_TROUBIES ON FACEBOOK

of student volunteers, provides one-on-one and group support to students.

A new sports support group facilitated by Guardian Angels members will launch this semester. And, for those struggling to balance academics and team schedules, Kathryn Dickson, the Learning Support Specialist at St. Francis, offers personalized coaching to help athletes manage their time and class workload.

Thanks to the leadership of high-profile athletes like Browne, Osaka and Biles, outdated expectations that athletes must push through every challenge without showing vulnerability are being redefined. In November, The Hidden Opponent launched a groundbreaking partnership with Adidas to raise awareness about mental health struggles among athletes.



SIMONE BILES SECURING HER 8TH ALL-AMERICAN TITLE IN 2023, HER FIRST COMPETITION AFTER WITHDRAWING FROM THE 2020 TOKYO OLYMPICS  
PHOTO COURTESY OF BODY AND SOUL

"It's not a weakness to deal with a mental health issue. It's human to deal with a mental health issue," Browne said in an interview in *Women's Health*. "We're encouraged to work extra hard to master our craft, and it should be the same when we're going to work on ourselves – in our mind, in our hearts."

It's a lesson St. Francis athletes should strive to embrace both on and off the field.



# Wildfires Ravage Los Angeles

BY MATILDA MYERS '27

At around 10:30 a.m. on January 7th, 2025, the Pacific Palisades neighborhood witnessed the birth of what would become the state's worst wildfire since the infamous 2018 Camp Fire.

Although arson investigators won't know what started the fires for months, experts say that climate change is the primary culprit. According to *The Los Angeles Times*, 'hydroclimate whiplash,' or the weather's rapid shifts between dryness and humidity, has increased the risk of wildfires in California. This would account for the rising number of incidents annually in the state. To make matters worse, unusually powerful winds elevated risks even further, allowing the fire to spread with higher speed.

A second fire, located in the Eaton Canyon area, contributed 14,021 burnt acres to the devastation. Together, the two wildfires resulted in the evacuation of tens of thousands of people, the destruction of more than 14,000 structures, and the deaths of at least 28 victims. And with 33 schools damaged and 10 campuses irrevocably ruined, almost 30,000 students have been impacted. There is no telling when many of these students will be able to return to school. Additionally, several hospitals and clinics in the Los Angeles area were forced to close. This included the evacuation of all patients as well as the postponement of hundreds of operations. Senior centers also faced evacuation orders for elderly residents, many of whom were bed-ridden or in wheelchairs.

Unfortunately, as of the 19th, these fires show no signs of slowing down. While the containment rates of both the Palisades and Eaton fires are above 50%,

meteorologists predict that high winds the week of the 20th will only worsen conditions. In the meantime, residents in the LA region prepare for the incoming dangers and continue to evacuate.

In times as dire as these, it is always important to remember the victims affected. Of the 8,024 wildfires that the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) responded to last year, none have wreaked as much havoc as January's Los Angeles wildfires. These are the most destructive wildfires experienced by the region, and the second most destructive in the history of California. More than 80,000 people were displaced by the Los Angeles fires, from celebrities to low-income households. But even as those numbers increase, there are still signs of hope. Huge volunteer forces offer food and shelter to victims. Aid organizations provide both short-term relief and long-term recovery. More than 100 million dollars have been raised. Despite weeks of tragedy, there is a light to be seen through the smoke.

Readers can help by contributing to the California Fire Foundation Wildfire & Disaster Relief Fund, Wildfire Recovery Fund, and the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank.



FIREFIGHTER PUSHES BACK AGAINST FLAMES  
ENGULFING HOME  
PHOTO COURTESY OF EURONEWS

# A New Era of America: Trump's Inauguration

BY NEHA VASANTHAN '28

Donald Trump's second inauguration marks a bold new chapter for America as he promises to "Make America Great Again," shortly after being sworn into office. Donald Trump, our 45th, and now 47th President of the United States was inaugurated on the morning of January 20, 2025.

While the ceremony was as routine as usual, however it took place in the Capitol Rotunda—making it the first indoor ceremony since President Reagan's in 1985. Despite the change in venue, the traditional proceedings remained intact as Chief Justice John Roberts administered the oath of office to President Trump, while Vice President J.D. Vance was sworn in by Justice Brett Kavanaugh.

The ceremony's musical side featured performances of many popular, skilled, and talented musicians. Carrie Underwood sang, "America the Beautiful" and renowned singer Christopher Macchio performed our nation's anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner." During the "Make America Great Again Victory Rally" at the Capitol One Arena on the 19th, as well as at the Liberty Ball on the 20th, the Village People sang their iconic hits "Y.M.C.A." and "Macho Man." Other entertainers like Kid Rock, Billy Ray Cyrus, and Rascal Flatts also performed at inaugural events.

There were numerous remarkable attendees, like the leaders of Paraguay, Ecuador, El Salvador, China, Italy, Spain, France, Germany and Argentina. The tech giant CEOs of TikTok, Apple, and Google, as well as Mark Zuckerberg, and Jeff Bezos made their appearances at the inauguration ceremony.

Elon Musk, leader of the Department of Government Efficiency and richest person on the planet, was right in the middle of it all.

Naturally, the ceremony included President Trump's inaugural address, which outlined several of his key initiatives and policy positions. Trump stated, "America's decline is over, the Golden Age of America begins right now," emphasizing his plans to "Make America Great Again." President Trump also declared National Emergency at the southern border, committing to stop illegal entries and to deport millions of "criminal aliens." Trump wishes to regain control of the Panama Canal and proposed renaming the Gulf of Mexico as the Gulf of America. He pledged to end federal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) mandates, advocating for a colorblind and merit-based system that recognizes only two genders. Additionally, Trump spoke about his survival against the assassination attempt on July 13, 2024, and how he believed he was saved by God for a reason—to make America great again.

As the nation embarks on this new chapter, the administration's actions in the coming months will be vital in shaping the future of the United States.



PHOTO COURTESY OF U.S. EMBASSY IN ROMANIA



# 2025: A New Year in Fashion

BY KATHY DHALAI '27

As we begin the new year with great anticipation for the new chances and revolutions 2025 will bring, it also ushers in new societal changes. The new year brings four major changes in trends that distinctively characterize that year or decade, such as the 80's with their brilliant neon colors. Every new year results in four alterations: new clothes, shoes, makeup and haircut trends. Sure enough, there are fresh developments in American culture and society. At the start of January, tendencies for 2025 are gradually emerging. So, what are the four changes that will take place in 2025?

In the clothing industry, sheer fabric is now used on the runway and in the streets. This new trend is all about lightweight transparent layers, which provide a dreamy touch to your daily routine. Another clothing trend is animal designs, particularly cheetah prints, which are taking over the fashion industry with their vivid and graphic spots. "It's the star of the year," said Kate Klem, wardrobe inspiration and fashion expert. Another standout is powder pink clothing, which includes dresses, coats, and slacks. This soft, romantic, and feminine apparel color is gaining popularity among individuals.

The first shoe type is ballerina flats, which provide a cute but chic appeal that complements any clothing. They first became popular in 2024, but this year they are growing much more popular than before. Square toe shoes are the "it" shoes for 2025, and they are getting increasingly popular. They add an attractive but distinct style to your entire ensemble.

Finally, high knee boots are a popular and recurring shoe trend.

In addition, there are a few subtle adjustments in the makeup alterations area, such as the "No foundation skin" look, which seems like you do not have foundation on by utilizing a concealer and luminous primer to get this glowing appearance that accentuates your face's characteristics in a natural and simple way. The second beauty trend is the "messy lined eye," which looks like you smudge your eyeliner with your finger before running out the door. This look creates a cat-eye effect but is more obvious and attractive. "Boyfriend Blush" is the final beauty trend. In 2024, we had that raised sculpted blush; this year, it's about that well-centered blush that goes downwards and ends in the very center of your cheek with a minimalist effort.

Lastly, the first hairstyle is the "Butterfly" haircut. Although it may not be a new trend this year, it is sticking around and gaining widespread acceptance. The second style is quite new in 2025, and it is the "Bob" haircut, which is not a new hairstyle but one that many people have adopted in 2025. Finally, there's the "BOHO" haircut. This haircut is fairly fresh, and few people have it, making it unique for 2025. That's the latest "tea" on fashion for 2025, its distinct identity that will be viewed later, and its new creative streaks in fashion and culture. Let 2025 be your most fashionable and ambitious year yet.

## Sources:

Instagram accounts @katyaklema, @thegraydetails, @megan.lombardi, & @hollahairlounge

## A Wicked Review

BY THOMASINA NICHOLSON '28

In a society dominated by CGI and green screens, *Wicked* builds a world with practical effects and real sets, calling back to the cunning techniques in *The Wizard of Oz*. The delightful cast and immersive language and writing, not to mention the wonderful costumes and musical numbers, make you feel as if you live in the magical land of Oz.

*Wicked* is the backstory of the Wicked Witch of the West, Elphaba (Cynthia Erivo), and the Good Witch of the North, Glinda (Ariana Grande). It answers the question “Are people born wicked, or do they have wickedness thrust upon them?”

This film, originally a Broadway production and a book series before that, explains how Elphaba came to be the iconic green witch we know today. It tells a tale of enemies-to-friends through emotional songs and fun numbers. The movie starts off right after Dorothy Gale has left and the Munchkins, a group of small people who live in Munchkinland, rejoice in the death of the wicked witch. However, when Glinda delivers the news, she lets slip that she was once Elphaba’s friend. We are then thrust into the wicked world, seeing their time at school and how their friendship grew. *Wicked* has themes of sisterhood, which I feel are especially in line with our Troubie spirit.

This insight into Glinda and Elphaba’s lives offers a lesson that sometimes we have to “defy gravity” and fight back against injustice. Cynthia Erivo is a strong singer who brings a sense of tenacity that fits Elphaba’s strong will so well. Ariana Grande is the perfect person to play the role of Glinda, as she has a background in singing and comedic acting.

Their timing and attention to detail make this movie such a magical watch.

In the opening scenes of the movie, a group of Munchkin children run through a field of tulips - referencing the tulip field in *The Wizard of Oz*. Many may assume this is not a real field, since today most movies are full of CGI effects. In reality, this is a genuine flower patch. Director Jon Chu planted over nine million real tulips to immerse the audience in the story. Additionally, when Elphaba and Glinda go to the Emerald City, they take a train, which is in fact a physical set piece.



PHOTO  
COURTESY  
OF  
TEEN  
VOGUE

The overall practical effects are reminiscent of the genius effects in *The Wizard of Oz*, such as the tornado into which Dorothy is swept. Even the actors themselves were committed to this movie. Cynthia Erivo trained to sing her big number “Defying Gravity” live in her flying harness. Using these traditional techniques shows how much work the film team put into the movie, with respect and recognition of the hard work of times past. I was blown away by the physical world-building and dedication to the craft. It made me appreciate this beautiful movie even more.



## A Wicked Review cont'd

With a running time of 2 hours and 40 minutes, it's hard to imagine that this movie would really be as enjoyable as it is. However, there is never a boring moment in this story. From the stunning costumes to the amazing choreography, every part of the film is full of incredible story-telling.

A touching tale punctuated with enthralling singing and dancing numbers, with the strong musical element throughout expressing the power of the theme-sometimes doing what's popular isn't doing what's right. *Wicked* easily entertains the audience every second of its journey.

## The Princess Bride: A Reliable Classic

BY DESLYN GALANG '28

There are two parts of the name "rom-com," romance and comedy, and *The Princess Bride* (1987) simultaneously defies staple genre tropes and creates an easily rewatchable experience. Being read by a grandfather to his sick grandson, *The Princess Bride* is a story of romance, loyalty, and adventure centering around the relationship between Westley (played by Cary Elwes), a farm boy turned pirate due to fate, and Buttercup (played by Robin Wright), a farm girl turned princess against her will. The movie is also populated by figures such as the vengeful Inigo Montoya (played by Mandy Patinkin), the hot-headed Vizzini (played by Wallace Shawn), the villainous Prince Humperdinck (played by Christopher Sarandon), and others,

leaving no shortage of characters to get attached to, hate, and laugh at.

When it's a rom-com, you need to have a pairing in which people will get invested and root for; it's the driving heart of the story. If a pairing isn't entertaining to watch, the rom-com has already failed. Westley and Buttercup are cute together, being reminiscent of tropes we all know. We all love the lovers torn apart by outside forces,



Fezzik (Andre the Giant), Inigo Montoya (Mandy Patinkin), and Vizzini (Wallace Shawn)

PHOTO COURTESY OF LION'S ROAR



Inigo Montoya (Mandy Patinkin).

PHOTO COURTESY OF WIKIPEDIA

and we all love watching them fight to get back together against whatever obstacle comes in their way.

At the heart of their relationship is their loyalty, trust, and devotion to each other, which makes for a sweet dynamic to watch.

## The Princess Bride: A Reliable Classic cont'd

I quite liked their original dynamic of pure sweetness, but the quick enemies to lovers speedrun for the rest of the film was fun to watch, too.

*The Princess Bride* is a pretty funny movie with a lot of the humor relying on the dialogue and less so on physical comedy. Luckily, the dialogue is extremely quotable and the jokes are exaggerated to a good degree. Although some of the dialogue is a little heavy handed, it didn't really bother me that much as I feel like it's fitting for the overall tone of the story. It is a comedy film, so I can excuse it if the dialogue is on the nose as long as the delivery and joke itself is funny enough.

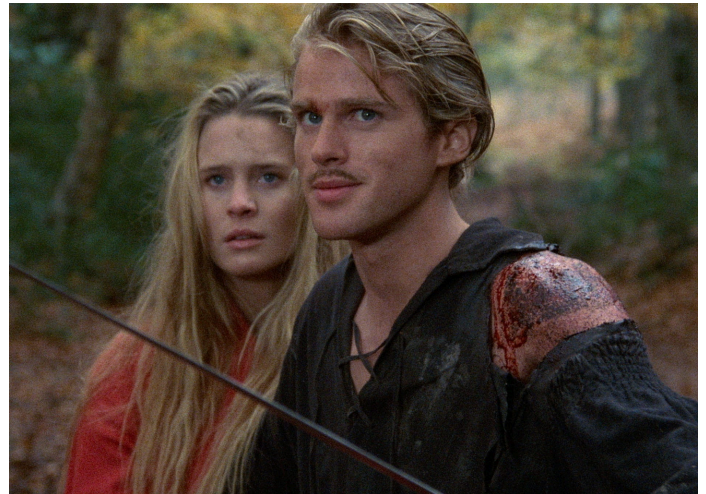


Vizzini in his most popular scene, where he says "Inconceivable!" very passionately.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CINEMABLEND

For physical comedy, the jokes themselves were simple but I did get a few laughs out of some of them. However, where the humor really shines through is the actors' performances, especially when it comes to Vizzini. Although Vizzini is a side character, I think he was a show-stealer for me because of how funny he was with the grumpy leader personality and especially the "Inconceivable!" mantra he repeats.

As this movie came out in 1987, it's automatically a classic to us modern viewers. I know it (probably) wasn't intentional since special effects weren't as advanced back then, but the practical effects and sets in this movie adds to the fairy tale vibe for me. The visual vibe of the movie reminded me of a pop-up picture book or a stage play, which added to the subplot of the grandpa reading the story to the sick grandson. In terms of themes, even back in 1987, it leaned into familiar, tried and true themes that can appeal to everyone.



The two leads of *Princess Bride*, Westley (Cary Elwes) and Buttercup (Robin Wright).

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CRITERION COLLECTION

There's the damsel in distress, true love persisting over everything else, a fairy-tale adventure plot, and so on. A thing with rom-coms, at least now, is the premise being very specific to each movie. This helps the films stand out as their own in a wide sea of rom-coms; however, the classic fairy tale vibe of *The Princess Bride* is one that's surprisingly distinctive in this genre. There aren't a lot of literal fairy tale-esque movies, so *The Princess Bride* is a fresh break from what you'd expect out of a rom-com.



# Galentine's Day Ideas

BY GEMMA FRISCH '28

What is Galentine's Day? Galentine's Day is a recognized holiday in the United States where women come together to celebrate what matters most: Friendship. Galentine's is celebrated on February 13th and has been celebrated annually since its creation in 2010. Thousands of women throughout America have created fun traditions that are done every year. Some believe that Galentine's is only for women who are single; however, any woman can celebrate regardless of their relationship status. This holiday is very famous, so much so that several TV shows have entire episodes dedicated to this holiday. For example, the 2009 American sitcom *Parks and Recreation* has one of the most popular Galentine's episodes that has aired. You can watch this episode in Season Two, Episode 16 titled "Galentine's Day". With this fun holiday, there are many ways you can celebrate with your closest friends.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ARIZONA FOOTHILLS  
MAGAZINE

One way to celebrate Galentine's Day is by having a spa day. Whether this is at home or at a spa, having a spa day is a great way to relax and unwind with friends or family. If you choose to have an at-home spa day, you should consider doing a relaxing face mask,

taking a bath and meditating or doing yoga stretches.

Another way you can celebrate Galentine's Day is by baking with your closest friends. Whether you bake Galentine's themed recipes or traditional chocolate chip cookies, baking with your friends is a great way to celebrate this day. After baking these treats, you can eat them together or hand them out to others as a way to spread holiday cheer! Afterwards, you can do a photoshoot. You can dress up with your friends and drive to a pretty location for fun photos that will last a lifetime! You can also celebrate Galentine's by making bouquets. You could collect flowers from your yard or buy them from a store and arrange them to become pretty bouquets. This is a great way to connect with nature and create beautiful art. Another way you can celebrate this holiday is by creating hand-written cards for family and friends you love and appreciate. This can either be a solo activity or something you do with others. Not only is this a fun activity that allows you to be creative, it's also something you can do for others to make them feel loved. Finally, you can celebrate by hosting or attending a rom-com movie marathon. These movies are very enjoyable to watch with your friends especially around the Galentine's holiday. According to YouGov, seven out of 10 people find romantic comedies enjoyable. Having a movie marathon is a great way to watch many of your favorite movies in a short amount of time, especially if you watch them with those closest to you.

Overall, Galentine's Day is an underrated and enjoyable holiday for many women in the United States.



## Galentine's Day Ideas cont'd

While there are many ways to celebrate, just wishing someone a happy Galentine's Day is sufficient and will spread joy throughout this day.

Take time on February 13th to show love to all the special women in your life, including yourself.

### Sources:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/home/galentine-day-ideas.cfm>

<https://today.yougov.com/entertainment/articles/45146-americans-relationship-romantic-comedies-poll>

## Valentine's Day Recipes: Love on a Plate

BY MILEE SHARMA '28

Are you thinking of spending Valentine's day with family, friends, or a special someone? I have just the thing to show them you care this season! Have fun creating delicious baked goods for all to enjoy! Whether you're a master in the kitchen or just a beginner, these recipes are accessible to all.

### Ingredients for the Chocolate-Mousse

#### Parfaits:

- 2 large Eggs
- ¼ Cup Sugar
- 3 ounces semisweet chocolate, finely chopped (⅔ cup)
- 1 tablespoon Dutch-process cocoa powder
- 2 teaspoons instant espresso powder
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- ½ cup heavy cream, plus more, lightly whipped, for serving
- 4 Belgian spice cookies, such as Lotus Biscoff, lightly crushed, plus more for serving

### Supplies:

- Heatproof bowl
- Medium saucepan
- Whisk
- Cooking thermometer (optional)
- Spatula or spoon
- Hand mixer or stand mixer
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Serving glasses or ramekins
- Refrigerator

### Instructions:

- 1) Place a heatproof bowl over a pot of simmering water (without touching the water). Whisk eggs and sugar together until the mixture thickens, doubles in size, and reaches 160°F (about 6–8 minutes). Remove from heat.
- 2) Stir in chocolate, cocoa powder, espresso powder, and salt. Mix in butter until fully melted. Let the mixture cool slightly.
- 3) Whip cream until stiff peaks form. Stir a third of the whipped cream into the chocolate mixture to lighten it, then gently fold in the rest.

## Valentine's Day Recipes con't.



PHOTO COURTESY OF PUBLIC DOMAIN PICTURES

### Instructions for Chocolate-Mousse Parfaits con't.

- 4) Layer half the mousse into two glasses, sprinkle it with crushed cookies, then add the rest of the mousse on top. Refrigerate for at least an hour or up to a full day.
- 5) Before serving, top with whipped cream and extra cookie crumbs. Enjoy!

### Ingredients for Yummy Chocolate Truffles:

- two 4-ounce quality semi-sweet or bittersweet chocolate bars (226g), very finely chopped
- 2/3 cup (160ml) heavy cream
- optional: 1 Tablespoon (14g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- optional: 1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- toppings: unsweetened cocoa powder, sprinkles, crushed nuts, melted or tempered chocolate

### Supplies:

- Saucepan or microwave-safe container (to heat cream)
- Spatula or whisk (for stirring)
- Plastic wrap (to cover chocolate mixture while setting)

### Supplies con't.

- Shallow dish or 8-inch square baking pan (for setting the truffle mixture)
- Small cookie scoop or spoon (for shaping truffles)
- Baking sheet or plate (to place truffles while rolling in toppings)
- Airtight container (for storage)

### Instructions for Yummy Chocolate Truffles con't.

- 1) Place the chocolate in a heatproof bowl. Set aside.
- 2) Heat the heavy cream until it is simmering. You can heat it on the stove or in the microwave.
- 3) Add the butter, if using, to the chocolate and pour the heavy cream evenly on top. Let the warm cream and chocolate sit for 5 minutes. Add the vanilla extract then stir until the chocolate has completely melted. Place a piece of plastic wrap directly on the surface (to avoid condensation) and refrigerate for 1-2 hours. **Tip:** Pour into a flat shallow dish, such as a 8-inch square baking pan, so the mixture evenly and quickly sets.
- 4) Scoop the set truffle mixture into 2 teaspoon-sized mounds. For larger truffles, 1 Tablespoon size mounds. Roll each into balls. This gets a little sticky, so see my tips above.
- 5) Roll each into toppings, if desired. Truffles taste best at room temperature!
- 6) Cover tightly and store truffles at room temperature for 3-4 days or in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.

Thank you to our staff who worked on  
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