

Shower menu salutes the engaged couple

With traditional weddings back in style, the bridal shower is once again an important event to celebrate the couple's engagement.

Today's showers aren't limited to female-only attendance. More parties include both the bride and groom and their friends and family members. Foods served at modern showers also reflect the current eating style. With the Caribbean islands as one of the most popular honeymoon destinations, a shower menu with a taste of the tropics is the perfect choice.

Cocconut is a staple ingredient in Caribbean-style cooking, and cream of coconut, a blend of tree-ripened coconuts and sugar processed into a creamy syrup, easily brings the sweet flavor of this tropical fruit to American cooking.

The bridal shower is complete without a beautiful cake. Easy Ambrosia Cake is a moist, rich cake that combines the classic ambrosia ingredients, coconut and orange.

The dramatic, mouth-watering appearance is a direct result of the cake's simple one-to-three preparation, based on the use of a yellow cake mix.

Cream of coconut is best known as an ingredient in the popular pina coloda drink, and a punch version of this tropical refreshment is just right for a bridal shower crowd.

Pineapple juice, crushed pineapple, club soda and cream of coconut are blended for a non-alcoholic beverage with pizzazz. Add light rum for the original pina coloda combination.

With its smooth consistency and sweet flavor, cream of coconut can substitute for similar ingredients such as heavy, maple syrup and sugar (plus liquid) in many recipes.

Tropical Sausage Bites is a savory appetizer where cream of coconut adds the complementary sweet taste in a sweet and sour dish. Sauté the engaged couple with a festive island-inspired celebration featuring delicious coconut creations.

EASY AMBROSIA CAKE
(Makes one 10-inch cake)

1 (18½-ounce) package yellow cake mix with "padding to"
1 cup Cream of Coconut
½ cup frozen orange juice concentrate, thawed
½ cup vegetable oil
4 eggs

Preheat oven to 350°F. In large mixer bowl, combine cake mix, ½ cup cream of coconut, ½ cup juice concentrate, oil, eggs and water. Beat on medium speed 2 minutes.

Pour into well-greased and floured 10-inch tube pan. Bake 20 to 25 minutes. Cool 10 minutes. Remove from pan.

With a table knife or sharp pocket knife, slice one inch apart in cake, almost to bottom. Combine remaining cream of

coconut and juice concentrate; slowly spoon over cake.
Chill thoroughly. Garnish. Store in refrigerator.

PINA COLADA PUNCH
(Makes about 4 quarts)
Ice Blast, optional
1 (20-ounce) can crushed pineapple, undrained
2 (15-ounce) cans Coco Lopez® Cream of Coconut
1 (40-ounce) can pineapple juice, chilled
2 cups light rum, optional
1 (1½-ounce) bottle club soda, chilled

Prepare ice ring in advance. In blender container, combine crushed pineapple and cream of coconut; blend until smooth.

In large punch bowl, combine pineapple mixture, pineapple juice and rum if desired.

Just before serving, add club soda and ice ring on back of ice.

Ice Ring: Fill ring mold with water to within one inch of top rim; freeze. Arrange pineapple chunks and maraschino cherries on top of ice. Carefully pour small amount of cold water over fruits; freeze.

TROPICAL SAUSAGE BITES
(Makes about 40 appetizer servings)

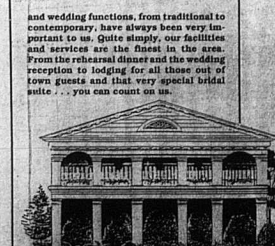
½ pound minced sausage, cut into ½-inch pieces
2 tablespoons margarine or butter
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1 (20-ounce) can drained pineapple chunks, juice-packed, reserving juice
½ cup Coco Lopez® Cream of Coconut
2 tablespoons prepared mustard
½ teaspoon garlic powder
1 large green or red pepper, cut into ½-inch pieces
1 (8-ounce) can water chestnuts, drained and halved

In large skillet, brown sausage in margarine; pour off fat.

In small bowl, stir together cornstarch, reserved pineapple juice, cream of coconut, mustard and garlic powder; add to sausage in skillet.

Cook and stir until sauce thickens. Add pineapple, pepper and water chestnuts; heat through.

Refrigerate leftovers.



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CREAM OF COCONUT AND ORANGE JUICE combine with a yellow cake mix for a quick and delicious bridal shower dessert.

The significance of the diamond engagement ring

Since the turn of the century, the softest diamond ring has been the American engagement symbol. Even today, as new traditions are toppling, the diamond ring tradition is stronger than ever.

Where did it begin and how did it evolve? Jewelers of America, Inc. (JAI), the national organization dedicated to consumer information and education about fine jewelry, offers the following historical notes about the engagement ring.

The ancient Romans were the first civilization to use finger rings as a sign of betrothal and marriage.

Solitaire rings were popular, as were bands of "open work," the Roman's technique of open-work chiseled from their gold made the contemporary "filigree" design, and rings similar to today's popular "eternity" ring with stones set all round a simple band.

However, it was not until 1477, when the Archduke Maximilian of Austria gave a diamond ring to Princess Mary of Burgundy, that the tradition of the diamond engagement ring began.

The reason a woman wears it on the third finger of her left hand is traced back to the early Egyptians who believed that the vein across (vein of love) ran directly from the heart to the top of the third finger, left hand.

Greeks believed the fire in a diamond reflected the constant flame of love. The name "diamond" comes from the Greek word "adamas" meaning unconquerable. It is any wonder that the diamond has come to symbolize the eternity of love?

This year, brides and grooms will spend over \$1 billion on engagement and wedding rings. And, because the dia-

mond engagement ring is usually the first piece of diamond jewelry a woman owns, it is important to select the assistance of an expert—your local jeweler—who can consider when purchasing such a gift.

Diamond cuts as well as ring styles, have changed throughout the years since Maximilian made his presentation to Princess Mary. Before the invention of the diamond saw in 1900, diamonds were polished to give them their shine. When the saw was used to break up the crystal, experts created especially efficient diamonds that had more brilliance and dispersion than ever before possible.

Today, lasers enable diamonds to be cut not only at rounds, marquises, pearls, ovals and rectangular shapes, but also to be fashioned into such unique designs as horse heads, stars and initials.

Styling changes have been subtle and gradual. In colonial days the engagement ring was a diamond hoop, acting as the "keeper" ring, because it was worn over the wedding band, acting as its "keeper."

The next style was the cluster ring, designed like an old-fashioned bouquet with a one-cut diamond in the center.

The Victorian rings were more ornate, sometimes using black enamel with gold in the diamond setting. They came in the piece ring, with three to five diamonds in a row across the finger. This was popular for many years, until the turn of the century and the introduction of the solitaire setting.

When you select a round or oval of the "fancy" cuts, such as marquise or pear shapes, you should have your jeweler explain the importance of the "Four Cs"—carat, color, clarity and cut.

Carat—refers to the weight, and therefore the size, of the gem. One carat is divided into 100 points, so that a diamond of 100 points weighs 1.00 carats.

Color—Totally colorless diamonds are very rare and represent the highest color grade. The various gradations, from extremely white to pinkish, are barely perceptible to the untrained eye.

Clarity—refers to the degree to which a diamond is free of interior blemishes or inclusions. The size and position of inclusions affect the value of a stone according to whether they interfere with

the passage of light through the diamond.

Cut—The art of cutting a diamond is so refined that a precise mathematical formula was developed. It called for most stones to be cut with 58 facets, each placed at a precise angle to one another.

How much should you spend for this gift of love that lasts forever? Consider the fact that most of your purchases depreciate in value and may not even last over the years.

A diamond, on the other hand, has lasting value; will always be the enduring symbol of your love, and will surely become a family heirloom for generations to come. It can be remounted in another ring, pendant or pin in the future and re-engaged over and over again.



Marriage and pearls: A love affair

The wedding day symbolizes the beginning of a life-long commitment and everlasting love shared between two people. It's a time of joy and celebration, a day in life when perfection is a must.

It is important, then, that nothing on that hallowed day be faded. Jewelry chosen for the bridal pair should be central to the occasion and no less real than their heart-felt love.

Traditionally, the pearl has been long associated with love, marriage and good fortune. It's no surprise that precious pearls given to the bride on her wedding day have become the most treasured heirlooms for generations to come.

From Mark, Ansony and Chopra to Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor, these cherished gems have woven an almost magical spell of romance since the days of time.

Cultural pearls possess a lustre and beauty that reflect and intensify the radiance of the bride's finest gown. They are available in a wide variety of flattering lengths.

A single strand choker, for example, is well-suited for a high, round neckline, while a matinee or opera length necklace has better proportions for a high standing collar or a plunging neckline. A luxurious bit of several stunning strands of nat-

ural pearls is an especially alluring way to highlight a deep, draped neckline.

pearls, add to that treasured necklace a Pearl of cultured pearl jewelry.

For the gown, a pearl cultured pearl necklace is elegant and dramatically appropriate.

Whether type of cultured pearl jewelry is chosen, experts advise purchasing high quality cultured pearls (AAA or A).

When you order to go with skin and hair tones: Round beads fall best blonde and cream; round beads for dark complexion.

Perfectly symmetrical, round pearls are most expensive, but an off-round or horseshoe shape has an intriguing natural beauty.

Very few pearls are completely free of surface blemishes, giving each pearl its own unique character. But the most important factor for wearing cultured pearls is the pearl's lustre, the deep-stated radiance that gives the jewel warmth and life.

Whether length or style you choose, the beauty and value of cultured pearls like love promised on that special day, and endure for years to come.

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