February Forecast
Feb. 2 is Groundhog Day, when the furry forecaster from Pennsylvania emerges from his burrow. If Punxsutawney Phil sees his shadow, it means six more weeks of winter. If he doesn’t, then spring is just around the corner.

Words From the Heart
The New England Confectionery Company adds about 20 new sayings to their classic candy conversation hearts every year. Some of the oldest phrases still seen today include “Be Mine,” “Kiss Me” and “True Love.”

Enjoy Flowers Longer
If the holiday or other special occasion brings you a bouquet of fresh flowers, help them last longer with this recipe: Dissolve 2 tablespoons each of sugar and white vinegar in a quart of warm water. Experts say another alternative is to mix one part lemon-lime soda with three parts water. Change the water mixture every few days.

Unconventional Is OK
Make your home work for you by forgetting about traditional decorating rules. Don’t want a sofa in your living room? That’s fine. A few chairs can work just as well. Don’t want two nightstands in your bedroom? That’s OK, too. Forget about expectations and focus on what you need in a room.

Deal of the Month
Keep an eye out this month for deals on tax preparation software. You may see promotions that discount the programs up to 50 percent. The deals generally won’t get any better closer to tax day, so if you see a good one, jump on it.

A Special Super Bowl
Super Bowl 50 will be played Sunday, Feb. 7, in Santa Clara, Calif., to determine the National Football League champion team. The game is being called the Golden Super Bowl because it is being played in the Golden State and because a 50th anniversary is traditionally the golden anniversary.

Go Nutty for Heart Health
February is National Heart Month, a good time to do something beneficial for this vital organ. One simple suggestion is to incorporate nuts or nut butters into your diet. Tree nuts like almonds, walnuts and pecans, as well as peanut and almond butters, have all been found to reduce cholesterol, which can decrease the risk for heart disease.
Logos of Love
Symbols for love and romance are everywhere we look: in fine art and magazines, on billboards and greeting cards, and even on the clothes we wear. Hearts, flowers, gems and other motifs bring to mind the emotional qualities of love and how we feel about our loved ones.

The Romans believed diamonds, worn to symbolize eternal love, were splinters of fallen stars. The first diamond engagement ring can be traced to the 15th century.

The personification of love and courtship, Cupid is depicted with a bow and quiver of arrows. The notion that being hit by Cupid’s arrow will make the victim fall in love comes from the myth of Cupid and Psyche.

Likely the most common symbol for love is the heart. At one time, scholars believed the heart was the seat of all human emotions. Giving a heart signified the act of giving everything to someone you love.

Roses represent beauty, purity and romance. Each color adds further meaning, with red depicting true love.

Doves have long been considered a sign of faithful and eternal love because they remain a pair for life.

The design of the Celtic knot, having no beginning and no end, is a testament to the enduring nature of true love.

Because of its hard casing, the scallop shell echoes the protective quality love sometimes takes. As the shell encircles and protects, so does love.

Other symbols of love include the ladybug, swan, dolphin and harp.

“If equal affection cannot be, let the more loving be me.”
—W.H. Auden

An Unforgettable Gift
Flowers and chocolates are fine Valentine’s Day gifts. But this year, consider giving your sweetheart the gift of an experience—one you can share together and relive in memories for years to come.

There are dozens of possibilities, depending on whether you want to travel or stay close to home. Here are a few ideas:

For a little excitement. Take to the sky with a helicopter ride or flying lesson. Not into engines?

Consider hang gliding or a hot air balloon ride. Have a need for speed? Try a NASCAR driving experience, or rent a motorcycle for a day and hit the highway.

For the creative type. Let the creative juices flow with lessons in painting, sculpture, pottery or stained glass. Learn the best moves with dance lessons, whether ballroom, salsa or Western swing. Discover the joy of cooking together or improve culinary skills under the guidance of a professional chef.

For the athlete or outdoors person. Consider golf, scuba diving, sailing, fly fishing or surf lessons. Want to really get back to nature? Learn how to live off the land in a wilderness skills clinic.

For some culture and comfort. Enjoy a walking tour of your favorite city’s historic district or culinary hot spots. For real pampering, spend the day at a spa and the evening on a dinner cruise.

Game Day Gastronomy
There’s more to love about Super Bowl Sunday than just the game—who can resist all the good food that goes along with it?

Super Bowl Sunday is the second-largest food consumption day of the year, behind only Thanksgiving, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Did you really think it was just about football?

It is estimated that Americans will spend more than $14 billion related to the Super Bowl, with much of that going toward food and beverages.

At the top of the list of football fan favorites is chicken wings. About 1.2 billion wings will be consumed on game day, which this year is Feb. 7. And don’t forget the sauce. More than half of wing eaters prefer to dip their chicken in ranch dressing.

Crispy and crunchy, chips are a longtime favorite. Football fans will eat 29 million pounds of them during game festivities—enough to fill 39 Boeing 747 airplanes.

Chips are best with dip, and guacamole is one of the healthier alternatives since avocados are considered a super food. About 8 million pounds of the green stuff will be consumed on Super Bowl Sunday.

Still have the munchies? Ask someone to pass the popcorn, and join your fellow fans in consuming 4,000 tons of it.
Vegetarian Three Bean Chili

Ingredients:
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 large onion, diced
- 1 large green pepper, seeded and diced
- 2 large garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 can (28 ounces) crushed tomatoes
- 1 can (16 ounces) diced tomatoes
- 1 can (15.5 ounces) pinto beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 can (15.5 ounces) white kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 can (15.5 ounces) red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 can (4 ounces) chopped green chilies, drained
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon chipotle Tabasco pepper sauce
- Chopped parsley (optional)
- Shredded cheese (optional)

Directions:
Heat oil in large saucepan over medium heat. Add onion, pepper and garlic, and cook until softened, about 5 minutes. Add chili powder and cumin; cook 1 minute.

Add tomatoes, beans, green chilies, salt and Tabasco sauce. Over high heat, bring to a boil; reduce heat to low. Cover and simmer 15 minutes to blend flavors, stirring occasionally. Garnish bowls of chili with parsley and cheese.

1849: William G. Morgan, a physical education director in Massachusetts, invents a sport called mintonette. A year later, the name was changed to volleyball.

1922: Reader’s Digest magazine is published for the first time.

1930: Pluto is discovered by astronomer Clyde Tombaugh at Arizona’s Lowell Observatory. The tiny, distant body was labeled the ninth planet in the solar system, but scientists in 2006 reclassified it as a dwarf planet.

1945: Captured in a now-iconic photograph, U.S. Marines raise the American flag on Japan’s Mount Suribachi during the Battle of Iwo Jima.

1953: Cambridge University scientists James Watson and Francis Crick announce their discovery of the chemical structure of DNA.


1980: The U.S. Olympic hockey team beats the heavily favored Soviet team at Lake Placid, N.Y., in a stunning upset dubbed the “Miracle on Ice.” The U.S. went on to win the gold medal.


2001: Two astronauts from the crew of the space shuttle Atlantis make NASA’s milestone 100th spacewalk.

2004: The online social networking service Facebook is launched.

2009: The Pittsburgh Steelers win a record-setting sixth NFL championship after a 27–23 victory over the Arizona Cardinals in Super Bowl XLIII.