

IDEAS FOR VALENTINE'S DAY DATING

The Valentine's Date You Should Be Planning Instead

Whether you've been together a few weeks or over a decade, we've got some ideas for a memorable and romantic evening out

BY [CARRIE BORZILLO](#), TODAY

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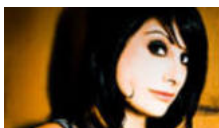
You've got just a few days left until Valentine's weekend. Are you ready?

For a lot of guys, it's going to be an especially stressful holiday. Especially since they have to compete with that goddamn *Fifty Shades of Grey* movie, which is setting the bar especially high (or low, depending on your opinion of mommy porn.) By now, you've bought her something nice—maybe you even selected something from our **2015 Valentine's Day Gift Guide**—but there's still the matter of what to do with her on Saturday night.

What qualifies as a great Valentine's Day dates can vary wildly depending on the couple, and how long you've been together. What works after a few months won't necessarily be the best call after a decade-plus. Maybe you're feeling uninspired this year, or every idea you come up with seems hackneyed or unimaginative. Relax, we're here to help. We consulted the experts for their recommendations, and then assembled a panel of long-time daters and happily married people to get their favorite Valentine's Day date memories.

Remember, there are no hard-and-fast rules for Valentine's Day, except for this: There's no shame in borrowing somebody

FEATURED EXPERT



Carrie Borzillo

Carrie Borzillo is an award-winning entertainment and lifestyle journalist and author of three books: "CHERRY BOMB: The Ultimate Guide to Becoming a Better Flirt, a Tougher Chick, and a Hotter Girlfriend, and to Living Life Like a Rock Star," Tera Patrick's "Sinner Takes All: A Memoir of Love and Porn," and "Nirvana: In the Words of the People Who Were There."

else's idea.

Under 1 Month

The Expert Recommends: "You have to be careful not to do too little, because she might think you're not that interested in her, or too much, because moving too fast or coming on too strong can scare some women off," says Helen Fisher, Ph.D., a research professor at Rutgers University. "Keeping it simple with dinner is appropriate."

A Great Date: My ex planned a simple but perfect date shortly after we met. He chose a dark, romantic French restaurant, and then a hotel lounge bar for after-dinner drinks. He even pre-planned the perfect excuse to bring me back to his place for a nightcap. We shared a love of art, and after telling me about his art collection over dinner, he asked if I wanted to see it. It was romantic, gave us an opportunity to spend more time together, and he was a perfect gentleman.

6 Months

The Expert Recommends: "Women need to be wooed," says Patti Stanger, a third generation matchmaker and star of the Bravo docu-series *The Millionaire Matchmaker*. "Instead of the pre-fix dinner, take a country ride through the mountains and do a picnic. You have to take it up a notch—do something you don't normally do. Take her someplace you two don't go to all the time."

A Great Date: "My date loved hockey, so I took her on a date to a hockey game," says Scott. "We ate crappy hockey/carnival food like kids and I paid beforehand to have her ride the Zamboni, which I knew she always wanted to do. I also had the mascot visit her at our seats."

1 Year

The Expert Recommends: "I think if the relationship is going great and you're in love, this is a good time to get a ring and propose," says Stanger. "Men should not expect a great woman to just wait around."

If a proposal is not your game plan this year, don't worry; almost any "game plan" is a good plan.

"There's a shortage of men who know how to properly court and impress women," says Jenn Mann, a licensed psychotherapist and host/lead therapist on VH1's *Couple's Therapy*. "If you can't decide on a restaurant, make reservations at an Italian, Japanese, *and* French restaurants, and tell her, 'We have reservations at these three places at 8 p.m., choose one and I'll pick you up at 7:30.'"

A Great Date: "My boyfriend is more of a whisky drinker and I really love my wine," says Dina. "We really don't fight over it, but he always says no to going to wine bars with me. So, for Valentine's Day around our first anniversary, he took me to a wine tasting at a local wine bar I haven't tried yet. It wouldn't have been a big deal if it was something we did all the time, but he surprised me with his willingness to drink wine and to do something that I really wanted to do."

5 Years

The Expert Recommends: "For the couple who has been together a long time and is thinking they want to try something new, making a night of *Fifty Shades of Grey* could be a good idea," says Dr. Mann. "If you know she's into it."

(Is She Too Kinky for You? How to keep your dominatrix satisfied—without getting whipped.)

A Great Date: Trying something new and different doesn't have to include paddles. Maybe there's a spatula instead. No,

no, not for spanking. For cooking. "I was bored with the dinner plans," says Kim. "So we took a cooking class together instead. We were so excited and learned so much that we ended up taking more classes, and now we do it every year. We get to relive the romance of that holiday whenever we pull out a recipe from our cooking class."

12+ Years

The Expert Recommends: "Especially when you've been together for a long time, it gets more important to just do something different," says Dr. Fisher. "Anything new and novel drives up the dopamine in the brain and can help sustain or trigger feelings of romantic love."

A Great Date: "We usually stay in on Valentine's Day and cook," says Cara. "However, this year, we're doing a triple date to [fast food chain] White Castle with two other couples. It's not really about what we do, it's about hanging out and having fun, and one of our favorite things to do as a couple is be silly and ridiculous."

(How long should you be dating somebody before you buy them a chocolate anus for Valentine's Day? Probably never. You weren't actually considering that, were you? Make sure you're avoiding anuses and any of these other **Hilariously Bizarre Valentine's Day Gifts**.)

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