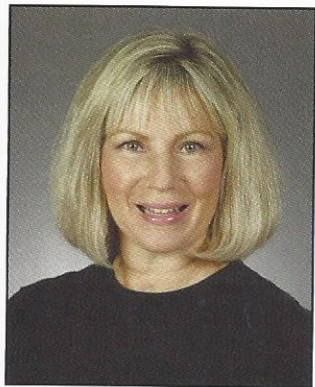




# FOR FELLAS ONLY: FIVE TIPS TO MAKE THIS VALENTINE'S DAY A ROMANTIC ONE



By Terry Matthews-Lombardo, CPM

If you're scratching your head trying to remember the last time you even used the word romantic, then you might also be fearing Valentine's Day, aka the most romantic day of the year. So, I've compiled some gentle tips to ease some of the self-induced anxiety you might have when attempting to put some passion back into your life, even if it's only for one night of the year:

**1 PLAN AHEAD.** Sounds simple enough. But as you read this, others have already phoned their favorite restaurants to make dinner reservations that you will soon find hard to get. Don't delay another day, but do put some thought into this. Where have you celebrated before? What type of food and mood do you want this year? How much are you willing to spend? And while you're on the phone, go ahead and ask for a really special table – now that's planning ahead!

**2 THINK THROUGH THE ENTIRE EVENING.** In addition to those reservations you just made, do you need to book a babysitter? Pet sitter? Will your spouse want to leave work early to get ready? How about buying some flowers and having them waiting on that very special table you've already reserved at that wonderful restaurant? Or how about pre-selecting your favorite wine so it's waiting and chilled when you arrive? It's the thoughtful touches like these that can melt a gal's heart. Sigh.

**3 DRESS TO IMPRESS.** Or at the very least, put some thought into what you're wearing on that special night. If you always wear the same type of casual apparel on your date nights, this would be the time to change things up a bit. Whatever you choose, wear something that says "I care and want to look good" to your partner. If you do this, just make sure that she also knows, so the advance wardrobe planning can be reciprocated.

**4 MAKE THE NIGHT SPECIAL NO MATTER WHERE YOU GO.** If eating out in a fancy restaurant on this very busy night is not your thing, put some thought into a creative alternative. How about arranging for a gourmet picnic under the

stars at a park or even in your own backyard? One trip to a specialty store or a local deli like TooJay's, and you can have a romantic gourmet meal in the time it takes to make all those snap decisions. If you go this route, don't forget the 'other' stuff like tablecloth, outdoor candles, utensils, etc.

start with some light hors d'oeuvres at home or maybe end the night enjoying coffee at a piano bar? Plenty of local establishments provide live entertainment, so make the most of this special night from start to finish and you'll both come away with a fresh appreciation of February 14, 2014. And that can only be a good thing, right?

**5 FINALLY, THINK ABOUT BOTH THE BEGINNING AND THE ENDING.** Should you

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