

Valentine's Day Advice: Follow Famous New Yorkers



By Jeryl Brunner

Someone once told me that when it comes to dating, especially early on, it's important to place you and your date into the epicenter of something fun and amusing. So, in case you aren't clicking or the conversation is generally going south, the environment around you can pick up the slack, offering instant entertainment.

So this Valentine's Day, instead of going for the quiet table at the dimly lit restaurant, opt for something a bit more lively that will spark conversation. Honestly, I've been told that the circus makes a nice date option, and is good for people watching and observation. ("Look at that clown juggle

14 plates! Get a load of that tightrope walker!") But since the circus isn't in town, I turned to famous New Yorkers and their favorite romantic New York City spots for advice:

1. Let me sell you a bridge

For the ultimate people watching and architecture viewing, do what makes John Oliver and Ana Gastayer go breathless: Walk across the Brooklyn Bridge. "Something as simple as walking across the Brooklyn Bridge can be a heart-stopping experience," explains Gasyeyer. "As a New Yorker there are a few moments that you can repeat over and over again that echo the original experience of coming here if you weren't born here."

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2. Be a karaoke king (or queen)

Pals Jason Sudeikis and Will Forte say there's nothing like bonding over karaoke in a private room. The pair and their friends will hit Sing Sing or Boho Karaoke and belt REO Speedwagon standards like "I Can't Fight This Feeling," TV theme songs (think *Family Ties* and *Good Times*) or tunes from Shrek. As Sudeikis notes, "You sing six or seven songs in an hour and can take chances. You can take risks."

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3. Pizza, much hotter than you think

How about a road trip for pizza and more compelling people watching? Kevin Spacey prefers Joe's, while Daniel Boulud says Di Fara rules. Owner Dom DeMarco, says Boulud "makes each pie one by one. People line up out the door to get in.

It's the old-fashioned Brooklyn pizza—thick, breaded dough, good tomato sauce ... He adds more cheese after it's cooked and lets it melt over the hot pizza, rather than cook the cheese

too much.”

4. Never underestimate the zoo, sing-alongs and gardens

For interesting people (and animal) watching, head over to Alex Rodriguez’s go-to spot, the Central Park Zoo. Then, mosey on over to Meredith Vieira’s beloved Strawberry Fields and sing along with the musicians crooning Beatles tunes.

Combine that with a trip to the Conservatory Gardens, Bette Midler’s favorite locale. The six-acre tucked away refuge is filled with bronze sculptures and fountains.

5. Drink in that view

Thirsty? Follow Gayle King’s lead and have a drink at the 35th floor Lobby Lounge at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel.

Nothing enhances date buzz like a killer view with the twinkling lights of Manhattan as your backdrop.

So go ahead, step out of the same old heart-shaped box this Valentine’s Day. You may just discover some seriously cool shared treasures.

Jeryl Brunner is the author of My City, My New York: Famous New Yorkers Share Their Favorite Places, www.mycitymynewyork.com. She has also contributed to O, the Oprah magazine, Parade, National Geographic Traveler, Delta Sky, Travel + Leisure, Huffington Post and many other publications. Jeryl lives in New York City, adores walking through Central Park and has downloaded an embarrassing number of show tunes on her iPod.

Kevin Spacey Doesn't Need an American Beauty



By Jenna Barbieri

This weekend at The Times Center in Manhattan, famous legends of film, theater, music and dance will join together to express their shared love for the arts at the 10th Anniversary of Arts & Leisure Weekend. Kicking off the spectacular event tonight will be none other than two-time Academy Award-winning actor-director-producer, Kevin Spacey.

Though currently starring as disgraced former lobbyist Jack Abramoff in *Casino Jack*, Spacey has a much bigger responsibility serving as creative director of The Old Vic theater in London for the last seven years. So what makes it so easy for Spacey to drop what he's doing and hop an eight-

hour flight to New York? Perhaps it's because he has no "ball and chain" to hold him back.

That's right, the 51-year-old film legend's ring finger bares no band. In fact, it never has! Yet Spacey continues to squeeze out every ounce of creative energy he has in him year after year. Which begs me to question, can being married to the arts act as a healthy alternative to being married to a significant other?

Spacey has never been known to go out of his way to get serious with another person, but he moved to another country to take the job at the Old Vic theater. When first questioned about his feeling on the big commitment Kevin would say, "I'm living my dream." Not being married gives him the opportunity to give full attention and devotion to his number one love – the arts. In a way, the theater plays the role (pun intended) as his wife: a wife whom he is completely passionate, happy and more than content with.

And Kevin Spacey isn't alone in this category! Among other passionate art lovers who have never walked down the aisle are Diane Keaton, Oprah Winfrey, Al Pacino, Sheryl Crow, Bill Maher and the legendary Coco Chanel. These stars are living proof that something that while some people get married when they're in love to have someone who will be there to hang out, listen to music and laugh with them for the rest of their lives, others can depend on their stage, their guitar, or their audience to fulfill the same feeling.

Want to read more about Kevin Spacey's hosting gig? Follow Cupid to The Times Center's 10th Anniversary of Arts & Leisure Weekend event page.