

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.