

HISTORY OF VALENTINE'S DAY

Every February, across the country, candy, flowers, and gifts are exchanged between loved ones, all in the name of St. Valentine. But who is this mysterious saint and why do we celebrate this holiday?

The history of Valentine's Day, and its patron saint, are shrouded in mystery. But we do know that February has long been a month of romance. St. Valentine's Day, as we know it today, contains vestiges of both Christian and ancient Roman tradition.

So, who was Saint Valentine and how did he become associated with this ancient rite? Today, the Catholic Church recognizes at least three different saints named Valentine or Valentinus, all of

whom were martyred. One legend contends that Valentine was a priest who served during the third century in Rome. When Emperor Claudius II decided that single men made better soldiers than those with wives and families, he outlawed marriage for young, single men -- his crop of potential soldiers. Valentine, realizing the injustice of the decree, defied Claudius and continued to perform marriages for young lovers in secret. When Valentine's actions were discovered, Claudius ordered that he be put to death. Other stories suggest that Valentine may have been killed for attempting to help Christians escape harsh Roman prisons where they were often beaten and tortured.

According to one legend, Valentine actually sent the first 'valentine' greeting himself. While in prison, it is believed that Valentine fell in love with a young girl -- she may have been his jailor's daughter -- who visited him during his confinement. Before his death, it is alleged that he wrote her a letter, which he signed 'From your Valentine,' an expression that is still in use today. Although the truth behind the Valentine legends is murky, the stories certainly emphasize his appeal as a sympathetic, heroic, and, most importantly, romantic figure. It's no surprise that by the Middle Ages, Valentine was one of the most popular saints in England and France.

Important Numbers

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TOP 10 “CHEAP” DATES

Everyone knows that sometimes Valentine's dates don't come cheap - here are 10 idea's to surprise your hearts desire:

The drive-in movies

A twist on the traditional movie date, treat your date to a night at the drive-in. One advantage to this is you can chat a bit privately in the car. Take your own little gourmet snacks instead of buying popcorn there and pack a blanket to snuggle under. Make sure you pick a movie that you will both appreciate.

Fish 'n' chips picnic

Find a great fish 'n' chip shop and a sunny day and host your date to a greasy, butcher-paper picnic in a park or on a waterfront. Take plenty of napkins and a bottle of wine to wash it all down, and then go for a stroll together afterward. This is a brilliant way to spend an afternoon together.

Ten-pin bowling

The classic high school date just had a revival. Whether you find an old-school bowling alley or a flashy disco number, this date idea can still be a blast all these years later. Don the silly shoes, eat the greasy food and laugh hilariously all night long. Most bowling alleys will also have an air hockey table, pool table, arcade games, and whatnot. Be big kids again and have fun trying your hand at them all.

A pool hall

When it comes to pool, a seedy bar is the perfect quirky, ironic spot for it. Or if you're keen to impress, do your research and find an up-market bar that offers it. Pick a quiet night and take your date there for a few casual drinks, a bowl of pretzels and a

bash at the pool table.

A day at the zoo

The zoo is an unexpected date idea that allows you to flow with conversation without much effort. Plus, you're not stuck on either side of a table like you are in a café, which means you can get close to your date and flirt with ease. There's room in a zoo to grab a coffee and sit on a patch of grass to chat one-on-one, and with so many animals you'll have numerous topics of conversation to make you look interesting without periods of uncomfortable silence or fishing for conversation starters.

Take them to brunch

A cheaper and less formal alternative to the traditional dinner date is the brunch date. Go for 11 a.m. on a weekend and suggest a top brunch spot for the two of you to meet. It's a lovely way to start the day, and if you decide you want the date to continue, suggest a stroll afterward or another coffee somewhere else or a glass of wine in the early afternoon.

Comedy club

Your local comedy club makes for a great night out. Call ahead and find a night when they have several different comedians on to ensure that at least a few of them will make you laugh and you're not stuck with one terrible one. Tickets will be cheap and drinks there will be too. If you do end up with a comedian that isn't to your taste, you and your date can bond over (quietly) heckling him in the corner to each other. Just don't call out your heckles or you'll come off looking like a jerk. As you don't get too much time to talk, take them for a coffee afterward and capitalize on the feel-good hormones from all that laughter. Remember not to sit near the stage where they can pick

on you.

Cook dinner at home

Cooking dinner at home is a great opportunity to get your date alone and show off your culinary talents. Even if you're not the world's best cook, there is surely something you know how to cook, and with just a few simple touches, you can make it an experience to remember. Say you don't have a signature dish? Easy. Serve an Italian antipasto platter to start, then the Bolognese with crusty garlic bread and then buy a tiramisu or something similar for dessert. As long as you set the table, light the candles, garnish your food, and play soft music, they'll be impressed.

Visit the markets

The great thing about this date idea is that there's a market to suit practically everyone. There are farmers' markets for amazing fresh produce - make sure to buy enough for a lovely picnic together afterward. There are flea markets where you might dig up old treasures together. There are also artists' markets, fashion markets and other food markets. You're guaranteed to have a lovely time wandering around together sampling niche products from small suppliers. Try everything new and different that you can get your hands on.

The dessert-only date

Tell your date you'll pick them up a bit later on, after dinnertime, and then whisk them to a great restaurant where you can order desserts and coffees to your heart's content. Get two forks and sample as much as you can handle.

Regardless of what you decide to do - make sure your date gets the impression that all your efforts are to make them feel special.

READY, SET, GO....

No one I know would ever describe me as a sports fan and football is something I'd sit down to watch. Still, I grew up in a college town with a dad who was a devout Boise State Bronco's fan and a sister who know more about the game than many of my friends... which means that despite my total lack of fan spirit, even I know that this particular time of year, the vast majority of America starts getting all geared up for Super-bowl Sunday.

While the game itself doesn't exactly spin me into a fevered frenzy of excitement, I'm a sucker for any good excuse for a gathering. I may not love the sport that much, but a good party? Count me in.

Yes, a Super-bowl party offers the perfect way to end that post-holiday social dead zone known as January. It's a low-fuss, low-key sort of shindig that doesn't demand a whole lot on the part of the host/ess beyond a reasonably-sized TV, decent reception, some comfy seating, and a spread of familiar, easy-to-prepare, homey eats. Still, there are a few things you'll want to keep in mind as you make plans to host the big event.

You and your guests might not be doing anything more strenuous than lounging around in front of the boob tube come game time, but hey, all that loafing demands the proper fuel. A football-viewing

party just isn't the same without a hearty smorgasbord of food and drink.

As you're planning your array of edibles, you'll want to keep the foods nice and simple. Football, after all, is not hoity toity and your menu shouldn't be either. Practically speaking, too, edibles that can be prepped ahead of time and don't require a whole lot of last-minute fuss are best, to ensure you can enjoy the game as much as your guests. Foods should also be easy to eat on a plate balanced on your lap, which means nothing that requires folks to cut up their food with knife and fork while digging in. Meanwhile, you'll also want plenty of chips and dippy type stuff that can just sit out at room temperature.

When it comes to offering something to wash all that food down, the choice is obvious: football means beer. And plenty of it. A rough estimate for your average crowd is that you'll need about 2 six-packs for every 3-4 people. (Although, if you know for a fact you hang with hearty drinkers or complete lightweights, adjust your quantities as necessary.) Don't forget to stock up on soda too, for those who aren't imbibing the alcoholic stuff. It's also nice to have some hot beverages on offer, especially as the game and party draw to a close and folks have to start sobering up to get ready for the drive home; brew up some coffee, and boil up water for tea and hot cocoa.

As for getting your pad ready for your little event, comfy couch-potato décor is the main goal. Pull out as many pillows as you can find and scatter them around for folks to grab as needed; have some throw blankets handy as well, to ward off any chills. Rearrange your seating as necessary to ensure that everyone has a reasonably decent view; clear off some floor space too, for those who prefer to lay out with just a few pillows.

As you're setting things up, make sure to have some snacks accessible from all seating areas, instead of piling everything on the coffee table in the middle of the room, where only a few folks are likely to be able to reach for munchies without getting up off their butts. Scatter bowls of nuts, chips and other light bites in key places all over the room. And keep a big cooler of beer readily accessible in the TV-viewing vicinity too.

Lastly, don't forget to make plenty of napkins available. Football food tends to be messy, so make sure folks have napkins on hand to wipe greasy fingers and lips – and to mop up any spills that might result when excited guests start gesticulating wildly at the TV.

However you chose to spend the afternoon – have a great time – and go Eli Manning....shoot, I don't even know who is playing....

COMMUNITY NOTES

We've made some changes to the **GARBAGE GARAGE**. We have added a dumpster for the cardboard recycling. Please be sure to break down your boxes and place them inside the container. Also - we have spoken to the vendor and if enough of you are interested, we can add the "food/compost" container, but we'd like to hear from you about participation before we pay for that service.

Again, please remember that the **BASEMENTS** do have a tendency to "leak"...please do

not place your treasures directly on the floor or next to the walls. We suggest that you store things on top of plats or on shelves.

Please keep your front and back door **LIGHTS** on at night. We want to prevent and deter any intruder from trying to enter by giving them the sense that nobody is home. If



you notice that your bulb is out, please let us know and we will replace it.

If you have received a **RENEWAL INVITATION**, please take the time to respond and let us know what your intentions are - you are welcome to call, come -by or email with any questions you may have concerning the conditions of your lease, renewal terms, etc. We like having you here and hope you plan to stay.

Thanks for everything and have a great month.

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"Away in a meadow all covered with snow
 The little old groundhog looks for his shadow
 The clouds in the sky determine our fate
 If winter will leave us all early or late."
 - Don Halley

FEBRUARY 2012

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2 Groundhog Day	3	4
5 Super Bowl Sunday	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14 St. Valentine's Day	15	16	17	18
19	20 President's Day	21 Mardi Gras	22 Ash Wednesday	23	24	25
26	27	28	29			

Please use the internet to find out more about the above celebrations.