

## 10 romantic restaurants to get your heart beating faster this weekend

valentine's day dining; From central city contemporary to stylish suburban, find the perfect place to wine and dine your sweetheart

BY JOANNE SASVARI, SPECIAL TO THE SUN FEBRUARY 11, 2010



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**Photograph by:** Ward Perrin, Special To The Sun

If you haven't made dinner reservations for Valentine's Day yet, you'd better get on it right away. Otherwise, instead of dining on the food of love this Sunday, you might just be cooking up a recipe for disaster.

Of course, not just any restaurant will do when it comes to celebrating the feast day of the mysterious saint associated with romantic love. The pub where you hang out on Friday nights to complain about your job is probably not the best choice. Neither is the cheap 'n' cheerful noodle house where you take the kids after Saturday morning soccer.

Instead, you want someplace special, with low lighting, beautiful decor, thoughtful service and, of course, delicious food. Someplace such as Le Gavroche, widely considered the most romantic restaurant in the city.

"It's a French restaurant, it's in an old house, it's very quiet. It's comfortable for people to have that intimate dinner," says owner Manny Ferreira, explaining "Le Gav's" romantic appeal. "The setting has a lot to do with it. On top of that, we're around to help them celebrate. We do chocolates, roses and champagne, and we include them in the price of the meal."

Whatever they're doing, it seems to be working: Over the past 32 years, there have been 162 proposals in the restaurant -- all except one happily accepted.

Whether you're planning a Valentine's dinner that's elegant, chic, traditional or modern, one thing's for sure: It has to be romantic. Here are 10 of the city's best mood-setting dining rooms.

For the exotic dreamer ...

Vij's Restaurant, 1480 West 11th Ave., 604-736-6664, [www.vijs.ca](http://www.vijs.ca)

When we think romantic dining, we tend to think French or Italian. But Vikram Vij's glowing little jewel box of an Indian restaurant is as romantic as any in the city -- and it will take you on an exotic flavour journey to boot. True, Vij's still isn't taking reservations, but the lineup tends to turn into a party that's the best fun in town. The food is well worth the wait, from the curried chicken pate starter to the just-can't-say-no lamb popsicles in fenugreek sauce to the B.C. spot prawns in coconut-lemon curry. Plus, as a celebrated sommelier, Vij has an extraordinary palate and has created an equally exceptional drinks list.

For the trendsetter ...

The Corner Suite Bistro De Luxe, 850 Thurlow St., 604-569-3415, <http://thecornersuite.com>

Vancouver's newest -- and most eagerly anticipated -- restaurant is the place to see and be seen right now. Corner Suite is all chic, retro-meets-contemporary black and white and turquoise, with a terrific location only a block away from Robson Street. With celebrity chef Anthony Sedlak's French-influenced comfort menu (mussels and chips, tomato soup, paper bag doughnuts) and Steve Da Cruz's magical mixology behind the bar, the dining is bound to be as terrific as the decor. It's been in the works for ages, so now that it's finally open, it's the place everyone is talking about. If your beloved is all about the hot new place, you can't go wrong with Corner Suite. It's sizzling!

For the quintessential romantic ...

Le Gavroche, 1616 Alberni St., 604-685-3924, [www.legavroche.ca](http://www.legavroche.ca)

This charming old character house on Alberni Street has romance written all over it, from the lace curtains to the embracing colours on the walls to the warm, welcoming persona of owner Manny Ferreira. The France-meets-West Coast cuisine is exceptional, with dishes like sablefish and scallops with star anise essence planned for Valentine's Day. The wine list is simply massive, with countless hard-to-find bottles. As a true romantic himself, Ferreira will arrange whatever you need to make love flourish, from chocolates to roses to, given enough time, a horse-drawn carriage.

For the couple on top of the world ...

Fraiche, 2240 Chippendale Rd., West Vancouver, 604-925-7595, [www.fraicherestaurant.ca](http://www.fraicherestaurant.ca)

Up at the top of a road that winds through the British Properties, you'll find this lovely little gem of a restaurant with some of the best views in the city. The room is elegant and modern, presided over by some exceptional first nations' art. The fresh cocktails -- like the Fortius gin martini made with muddled

celery, tarragon, yuzu and chartreuse -- are irresistible. But it's chef Wayne Martin's updated approach to classics like the smoked cheese souffle or lamb rack with goat cheese gnocchi that's the real star.

For when life is coming up roses ...

Hart House, 6664 Deer Lake Ave., Burnaby, 604-298-4278, [www.harthouserestaurant.com](http://www.harthouserestaurant.com)

Nestled amid the gardens of Burnaby's Deer Lake Park, this lovely, rambling heritage manor house is the perfect destination for romance. The Tudor Revival mansion may be more than a century old, but executive chef Kris Kabush's fresh, innovative Pacific Northwest cuisine is deliciously modern, featuring dishes like butter-poached lobster or roast pheasant with king mushrooms. It's all complemented by a lively, mostly New World wine list.

For the perfectionist ...

Bishop's Restaurant, 2183 West Fourth Ave., 604-738-2025, [www.bishopsonline.com](http://www.bishopsonline.com)

For 25 years, John Bishop has been doing everything just right here at his coolly cosy Kitsilano restaurant. One of the first to champion regional cuisine, Bishop's still does it best, thanks to the work of gardener-cum-chef extraordinaire Andrea Carlson. Dishes such as Fraser Valley duck breast with quince and duck leg tortellini simply pop with fresh flavour. A well-edited wine list completes the experience nicely. But it's the exquisite service, perfectly attentive but never intrusive, that makes this an ideal destination for romance.

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For those trying to escape the Olympic crowds ...

Pearl, 14955 Marine Drive, White Rock, 604-542-1064, [www.pearlrestaurant.ca](http://www.pearlrestaurant.ca)

Opening weekend of the 2010 Games is sure to be a madhouse in the city. Which means it's the perfect opportunity to visit the Pearl, a perfect little gem of a restaurant on the White Rock waterfront overlooking Semiahmoo Bay. The mood is stylishly contemporary and chef Jeremy Keighley's modern West Coast cuisine perfect for a romantic evening. Dungeness crab fritters, seafood pot au feu, mushroom strudel, chocolate ganache and an award-winning wine list -- now that's true love.

For the nature lover ...

The Teahouse in Stanley Park, 7501 Stanley Park Drive, 604-669-3281, [www.vancouverdine.com](http://www.vancouverdine.com)

Get here early, take a stroll through the towering trees of the Stanley Park rainforest and enjoy the best sunset views in the city. The Teahouse has been a Vancouver landmark for decades and is now part of the same Sequoia Company chainlet that includes Cardero's and Sandbar. But here chef Francois Gagnon has kept many of the favourites that have people coming back year after year, like the beef short rib bourguignon, and introduced fresh, West Coast-influenced dishes like the Arctic char with squid perogies. Add an impressive wine list -- and that view -- and you'll have a night to remember.

For the wine lover ...

Bacchus Bistro, Domaine de Chaberton Estate Winery, 1064 216th St., Langley, 604-530-9694,

[www.domainedechaberton.com](http://www.domainedechaberton.com)

Dine surrounded by vineyards at this charmingly cosy winery bistro in the Fraser Valley. The flavour may be French, with traditional dishes like chicken chasseur, pork rillettes and classic French onion soup, but the ingredients are all locally farm grown, and the relaxed atmosphere is pure West Coast. Plus

a few sips of Domaine de Chaberton's award-winning wines are sure to put you in the mood for romance.

For the very modern romantic ...

Lupo Restaurant & Vinoteca, 869 Hamilton St., 604-569-2535,

[www.luporestaurant.ca](http://www.luporestaurant.ca)

The new Lupo Restaurant is an old one reborn: Executive chef and co-owner Julio Gonzalez Perini has reclaimed his much-loved Villa de Lupo location and brought his exquisite Italian cuisine back to the old Yaletown character home. But this time around, the decor is cool and contemporary, with fresh white walls and sleek dark furniture. The menu focuses on flavourful comfort food like roast chicken or ricotta gnocchi with braised pork cheeks. Sommelier Michael Mameli has created a nicely focused wine list of mostly B.C. and Italian vino. Best of all for romantics, the restaurant features cosy little nooks just perfect for cuddling up to that someone special.

for more suggested Valentine's day meal destinations go to [vancouver.com/entertainment](http://vancouver.com/entertainment)

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