

The ultimate restaurants to pop the cork this Valentine's Day

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From taking a leaf out of Shakespeare's plays to a Roman-inspired feast, these American Express® dining merchants come up roses on the most romantic day of the year.



"If music be the food of love, play on!" William Shakespeare famously wrote in *Twelfth Night*. But where to go if you're a star-crossed lover in search of a romantic dining experience? Well, American Express® has scoured the land to uncover a handful of uniquely romantic experiences to make this year's Valentine's Day a night to remember.

If you and your partner are lovers of the Bard, you would be hard-pressed to find a more apt locale for Valentine's Day than the Social Kitchen & Bar in Hyde Park Corner shopping centre. Chef Beatrix Thornhill has created a tantalising four-course menu according to the theme, Shakespeare in Love, at this American Express restaurant merchant.

Tickets, which can be purchased on Webtickets for R599pp include a 750ml bottle of Italian bubbles along with the meal which starts with a tapas course titled The Tempest (including Carrot and Sesame Fritters with cashew nut dripping, a deconstructed Avo Ritz and Wild Mushroom choux puff). This is followed by an Israeli Couscous Salad featuring olives, sweet corn, smoked salmon and tempura artichoke hearts before mains of Grilled Seabass served with edamame risotto or Springbok Wellington with rosemary baby greens, balsamic beets and black cherry juice. Dessert? Aptly titled All's Well That Ends Well, expect a Chocolate and Red Velvet Delight.

For more information about Social Kitchen & Bar, visit www.socialkitchenandbar.co.za.

If your taste is drawn to a fusion of international and local flavours in a sophisticated and unhurried atmosphere, then you will be well suited to Signal restaurant found in that citadel of Cape Town hospitality, the Cape Grace Hotel located on a private quay in the city's V&A Waterfront.

For R1,650.00pp including wine or R1,250pp excluding wine, guests can expect an extra ordinary taste sensation including Prawn Lollipops with smoked potato parmesan, beetroot and goats cheese salad; Tuna Tartare and a Strawberry Sorbet palate cleanser before a choice of Confit Duck with potato galette, cherries and turnips or Dry Aged Rib Eye featuring whipped miele pap, maple glazed carrots and coffee jus. Dessert is Raspberry Parfait with vanilla crème, litchi gel and rose ice cream while tea or coffee is served with friandise.

For bookings, email functions@capegrace.com.

Nestling in the Avonmore Centre in Morningside, Durban, multi-award winning 9th Avenue Bistro places the emphasis on fresh and creative cuisine, and its special Valentine's menu, at R650pp, is testament. Couples will be welcomed with a Sparkling Raspberry Gin Fizz served with blini, sour cream and olive crumble before a choice of appetizers including fresh Burrata with figs, brown sugar and hazelnuts and Gin Cured Salmon with Crème fraîche, homemade seed loaf and dill cucumber. For mains, you will be able to choose from six choices including Slow Roast Lamb shoulder served with pearl couscous, suma yoghurt and pomegranate molasses; Crispy Roasted Free-Range Duck on a potato rosti with roast carrots, spinach, peanut and herbs and Baby Lango Tail Squid Ink Linguine. Meanwhile, there is a choice of three mouth-watering desserts and coffee and chocolate petit fours to complete the meal. Note that the restaurant requests a R100pp

deposit to secure your booking. You can contact 9th Avenue Bistro on 031 312 9134 or info@9thavenuebistro.co.za.

Hankering for a romantic sanctuary from the hustle and bustle of Joburg? The Winehouse at chic boutique hotel Ten Bompas in Dunkeld West is the perfect locale.

Thanks to head Chef Johannes de Bruijn, this restaurant has become a cult favourite with Joburg foodies, and for Valentine's Day you can be assured of an inventive gastronomic feast. The Valentine's Day menu spans an extensive nine-course-tasting dinner for R750.00pp including food, tea and coffee and gratuity. And if you would prefer making the occasion even more special, consider staying at the hotel for the night – at a rate of R4,400.00 for suite you can savour a welcome bottle of sparkling wine, the tasting-dinner in your suite or in the restaurant and a romantic breakfast with a bottle of sparkling wine in the hotel garden the following morning.

Bookings essential by calling 011 325 2442 or email reservations@mix.co.za.

Under the direction of famed restaurateur Giorgio Naves, Cape Town's 95 Keerom is synonymous with simple Italian cuisine created with fine dining flair. And its elegant décor and intriguing history, originally housing the stables and slave quarters of the Company Gardens, provides the perfect setting for a night of romance.

The restaurant is offering either the choice of an a la carter or a three course set menu with a glass of Moët & Chandon Imperial Brut for Valentine's Day. The set menu features a delicious avocado, rocket, tomato, blue cheese, fresh pear, walnut, olive oil and salt and pepper salad starter, while for main the restaurant is offering Il Pescato del giorno alla "95" (linefish of the day, done in its signature style) while chocolate lovers will be pleased with Il Fondente al Caioccolato, the dark Italian chocolate hot fondant with a delectable liquid chocolate centre dessert to finish. And if one glass of bubbly won't suffice, you have the option to upgrade your menu with a bottle of Moët & Chandon Imperial Brut for an additional R1,250.00.

To make a booking, contact 95 Keerom on 021 422 0765 or info@95keerom.com.

What if you're a jetsetter pressed for time but searching for a spot far away from the beaten track? How about dropping into Free State landmark De Oude Kraal Country Estate which is just 35km south of Bloemfontein, and boasts its own private airstrip and helicopter landing pad to ensure you can make a grand entrance.

The estate's restaurant has turned to ancient Roman times for a Valentine's Day feast with a difference. With the theme, Romantic Roman, they are serving a fine dining 7-course dinner inspired by Roman feasts and featuring aphrodisiac elements such as oysters, fresh figs, watermelon and pomegranate, saffron, asparagus and chocolate. The dishes, specially created by chef/owner Marie Lombard, daughter Marie-Louise Nel and their team, start with a welcome glass of bubbly and cost R750pp.

To make a booking, contact 051 5640 733 or info@deoudekraal.com.

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