

Be My Valentine -- Or Not

Valentine's Day Grinch Says 'Rejoice' if You're Alone

By WENDY BRUNDIGE

Feb. 10, 2007 — - Valentine's Day is Wednesday -- and if that's news to you, then you probably fit into one of two distinct groups: Those who do have a valentine but have done nothing to plan for the day, or those who are alone.

In either case, Valentine's Day can be a cringe-inducing holiday, and the cringes are not limited to singletons.

Village Voice columnist and New York nightlife personality Michael Musto has a characteristically iconoclastic view of what is supposed to be the most romantic day of the year.

"It's an enforced day of romance, almost legislating a connection between a couple that should be there anyway," he said. But "if you're going to celebrate it, you might as well have fun."

Professional help is available for almost anything these days, so it should be no surprise there is plenty of advice on how to have fun.

Samantha von Sperling is the owner of Polished Social Image Consultants in New York City, a firm offering everything from dance lessons to personal shopping. This Valentine's Day, Sperling is gift-hunting for more than 20 clients, and she says that even though it may be the last minute, it's still not too late to find that perfect something for someone special.

"You can make dinner reservations, you can buy spa packages, you can actually call in sick from work and make a day of it," Sperling said. "You can take your date shopping, offer to buy her a dress, have her try things on. Maybe there is something that she's always wanted."

Sperling recommends planning an escape.

"It can be a picnic somewhere that you pack yourself ... or a picnic of champagne and caviar by the fireplace on the living room floor," she said.

Sperling says a shopping spree could also be a gift for a man, but only if he's "a fashion-forward kind of metro-sexual."

Otherwise, she advises more traditional macho fare, "like sporting events, steak houses, cigars."

But what if your budget or your taste requires something simpler? Sperling says, don't worry, the traditional flowers or chocolate are still appreciated.

"I don't know of a woman who doesn't like chocolate. It might sound a little hokey, but they are still good stand-bys," she said.

Unless your valentine is Michael Musto.

"Avoid the whole chocolate and flowers routine," Musto said. "It's so rote, and it comes off as an obligation. It has no spark, no originality. ... Get them their fantasy gift. Spend your fantasy night together as a couple; re-live the things that made you a couple to begin with."

One thing both agree on: Creativity, more than money, is the key ingredient in the perfect Valentine's Day.

"At the end of the day, I really don't believe that the price tag is going to make a difference where true love is involved," Sperling said. "If you use a little imagination, you can do something extraordinarily romantic on a shoestring budget."

And what are those without a valentine to do? Musto has some advice for them too.

"Rejoice that you don't have to spend any extra money on stupid gifts," he said. "Just spend it on yourself. Buy yourself flowers and chocolates."

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