

# The Day After Valentine's

By Kristen Manieri

You'll have a hard time finding people, especially women, who'd advise you against being romantic on Valentine's Day. For many people, this "Hallmark holiday" is one of the few times each year when we remember to do something endearing. Thank goodness stores start reminding us the day after New Year's.

Don't get me wrong—I'm no cynic about Valentine's Day. It's a wonderful opportunity to show the people we love how much we care. I just think it lets a lot of us off the hook. Being kind, generous and thoughtful to the people we love is something we could be doing any time of the year.

So why not consider Valentine's Day the romantic's New Year's Eve . . . the day we kick off a whole year of being caring and thoughtful. Let's take the focus away from how we plan to wow our sweetie on this one day, and look more closely at how we can become better partners every day.

## A Year of Romance

Think of Valentine's Day as a fresh start for your love life. What could you do this year to take your relationship up a notch? First, make plans. Commit to weekly or monthly date nights. Plan a romantic weekend getaway together. Consider courses you'd like to take as a couple, or projects around the house you could work on together. By the way, you'll have a much better chance of following through with any of these ideas if you get your calendars out and start scheduling some of these commitments.

Next, make a pledge to be more romantic and thoughtful to each other. Need ideas? You'd be surprised by the number of books that are filled with

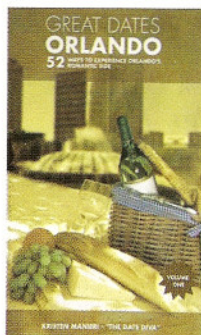


suggestions for being more romantic. One of my favorites is *A Year of Romance* by Mara Goodman-Davies. It gives unique ideas for each month and season of the year. You may also like *Wear More Silk: 131 Luxurious Ways to Add Romance, Spice and Adventure to Your Everyday Life* by Jennifer Basye Sander; or *1001 Ways to Be Romantic* by Gregory Godek.

By all means, kick off this new year of romance with a memorable Valentine's Day. Go out for a fabulous lunch or dinner . . . or stay in and hire a personal chef to create your Valentine's dinner . . . or simply make a decadent dinner for yourselves.

Your thoughtful gestures, big or small, will make your partner feel appreciated and cherished, so don't hesitate to be a little creative. Cooking her favorite meal, or surprising him with a basket filled with some of his favorite things will go a lot further than conventional Valentine gifts. And while there's no shortage of romantic greeting cards, adding your own words will have much more sentimental value.

Valentine's Day doesn't have to be the one day of forced sentiment. With a little planning, you can experience not only a memorable evening, but a whole year of wonderful moments together.



Kristen Manieri is the author of *Great Dates Orlando: 52 Ways to Experience Orlando's Romantic Side*. To subscribe to her newsletter: [greatdatesorlando.com](http://greatdatesorlando.com).

