

dine & date

special report

Perfect 10 for Valentine's

You don't need to buy into the schmaltzy version of Valentine's Day to let your significant other know you care. Whether you're wooing the only person to ever swipe right on your Tinder profile or celebrating devotion to a long-term partner, choosing the right restaurant for your Valentine requires a bit of research. **Carla Grossetti** has done the hard work for you, narrowing the options to 10 Sydney restaurants that are sure to work like a charm.

Instant appeal @ Bistro32

From the street, Bistro32 looks like any other suburban bistro in Sydney. But step inside and you will find a gently lit space with instant appeal. Impress your blogger boyfriend with this crumb of news: chef Chris Carroll's restaurant Christies in Kogarah Bay was awarded two hats in one of the earliest editions of *The Good Food Guide*. Some three decades on, Carroll is more interested in having you eat well than being inducted into a gastronomic hall of fame. At \$75 per person, the five-course feast features French fare such as lobster bisque and lamb cutlets with pea puree and roasted sweet potato. Sante!
32 President Avenue, Caringbah,
8544 1418, bistro32caringbah.com

Whisper 'ti amo' @ Giro Osteria

"Love," wrote 19th-century French writer Stendhal, "is lovelier in Italy and everywhere else is a bad copy." Whisper "ti amo" on the banquette under the giant blackboard and admire the floorshow led by chef Ruben Martinez, who can be seen hard at work behind a curtain of chopping boards and well-hung meat. The San Valentino menu will strike your date with love's colpo di fulmine (lightning bolt) with seductive share plates such as freshly shucked oysters, antipasti, spaghetti with scampi, snapper in a stew of red peppers and mussels and fregola and the chef's take on a tiramisu. Cost is \$95 per person.
3/1 McDonald Street, Cronulla,
9523 0137, giro-osteria.com.au

Get loved up @ Lo Lounge

With its industrial chandeliers, art on the walls and cordoned-off kissing booths, Lo Lounge is just the spot for an illicit rendezvous. Get intimate over plates designed to share such as roasted baby Thirlmere chicken and wilted radicchio or Tinder Creek duck breast with celeriac, beets, shiitake, endive and masala jus. Paramours will be pleased with desserts described as Orgasmic Passion, Pop Your

Cherry and 50 Shades of Earl Grey. If you want that affinity to flow on after dinner, you can "get a room" in the newly refurbished luxury hotel.

6 Cowper Wharf Roadway,
Woolloomooloo, 9331 9000,
ovolohotels.com.au

Become besotted @ Bistro Moncur

This atmospheric bistro is a glittering star in Woollahra's dining firmament. Take some locally sourced bounty from the sea and land, apply some French technique and you're courting perfection. There is a lot of love to be found with dishes such as Barossa chicken liver pate, onion confit, cornichons and brioche as well as fillet steak with Bearnaise sauce. Put your date to the test to see if he is prepared to share that dessert of lemon verbena bombe Alaska. Cost: \$72 per person for two courses; \$88 for three.
116 Queen Street, Woollahra, 9327 9713,
woollahrahotel.com.au

Learn the language of love @ Hemingway's

Take a balmy night, add a laidback beach backdrop and a few French accents and the scene is set for romance. Hemingway's new owners Sonia Piantoni and Emmanuel



Deleuze took over the reins at the literary-themed small bar in 2015 when they moved here from the French Alps, where they own Le Montana, a Michelin one-starred restaurant. With French-trained Hungarian chef Zsolt Kovacs at the helm, the food and mood is French. The specials du jour include steak tartare, fries and salad (\$28) or moules marinières (\$27), both paired with a glass of French wine.

48 North Steyne, Manly, 9976 3030,
hemingwaysmanly.com.au

Get lucky @ Lotus The Galleries

Lotus The Galleries is laying on the charm with its Lucky \$88 Lovers' Banquet. Guests



THE CULINARY CUPID FOR ANY VALENTINE TASTE

InterContinental Sydney brings romance to the table with an array of offerings across its signature restaurants and Supper Club this Valentine's Day.

From the hopeless romantic to the most cynical of sweethearts, InterContinental Sydney has you covered as the ultimate culinary cupid this Valentine's weekend. Whether you're toasting to coupledom early or holding off until Sunday 14th, you'll find your Valentine palate with InterContinental.

With love in the air and an extra day in the calendar, InterContinental Sydney is paying homage to the 2016 leap year, set to delight four lucky romantics with a surprise room key. Called "Yours Truly," InterContinental Sydney diners are encouraged to share their leap year gesture - a long-standing tradition where norms are waived and ladies take the lead - by sharing their story with us through the #intercontinentalsydneyvalentinesday hashtag. Grab your go-bag and prepare to end the night in Harbour-side luxury.

CAFÉ OPERA FOR THE INDULGENT VALENTINE

Begin the affair early with a glass of sparkling on arrival and a tailored pre-Valentine's dinner at Café Opera. Exclusive to Saturday 13th, delight in the buffet's theatrical display for \$99 for adults, \$50 children.

For the Sunday devotees, indulge in champagne on arrival and the aphrodisiac of oysters over Café Opera's famous buffet. With a box of petit fours to spoil your loved one and a feast of seasonally-inspired creations, enjoy a night for two or cosy up with the family. \$119 Adult, \$45 children, \$99 IHG Dining Members.

117 DINING FOR THE SEDUCTIVE VALENTINE

Nestled inside the rich hues of InterContinental Sydney's signature restaurant, spoil your sweetheart and ignite your palate with 117's bespoke degustation menu. Designed especially for the occasion with matching wines and petit fours, you'll arrive in heaven with a post-dinner drink perched on level 32 in Club InterContinental's rooftop lounge, Supper Club. \$200.00 per adult.

SUPPER CLUB FOR THE AMOROUS VALENTINE

For an unforgettable night, indulge in a little tête-à-tête over a cheese plate and bottle of Mumm while you breathe in the aroma of Sydney's skyline. Valentine's Day Wine & Cheese, \$170.00 per couple.

HARBOUR ROOM DINNER FOR THE EXTRAVAGANT VALENTINE

If you're looking for the ultimate in decadence, treat your temptress to an exclusive event inside the iconic Harbour Room. Beneath sweeping Sydney views, you'll indulge in a feast of canapes followed by a four course degustation menu complete with matching wines and champagne on arrival. \$240.00 per person.

Bookings: For more information visit www.icsydney.com, call 02 9240 1396 or email restaurant.reservations@interconsydney.com for all bookings.


INTERCONTINENTAL
SYDNEY



will receive a glass of French sparkling rose on arrival and a beautiful banquet for two including “lover’s dumplings”, “50 shades of China” and a gift pack of petit fours as well as a specially designed dessert degustation to reflect wealth, prosperity and longevity. For an extra \$30, Lotus will offer matching wines so you can toast your good fortune mid-canoodle. Finish the night with a mooch around the Fairfax Lunar Markets in Pyrmont Bay Park.
1,500 George Street, Sydney, 9267 3699, lotusrestaurant.com.au

Giddy up @ The Gantry

The menu at The Gantry reads like a staccato love letter to the food obsessed. Indulge in some #foodporn foreplay by

reading aloud some of the ingredients listed on the seven-course menu: whiting - oyster - cucumber - tarragon - cobia - carrot - urchin - ink - beef - pickled greens - black garlic - seaweed. If, after a couple of glasses you’re feeling frisky, stay the night upstairs in the oh-so-posh Pier One. Cost: \$130 per person with Veuve on arrival; \$195 with matching wines.

11 Hickson Road, Sydney, 8298 9910, thegantry.com.au

Feel kneaded @ Salt Meats Cheese

If you want to mingle with other singles or surprise your amore with a sensuous experience, book into a pasta-making class

on Valentine’s Day. There will be two cooking classes on the day Italians call il giorno della festa degli innamorati, which – in addition to lesson and lunch or dinner – includes a glass of bubbles and Pana chocolate. Cost: \$115 per person.

41 Bourke Road, Alexandria, 9698 0609, saltmeatscheese.com.au

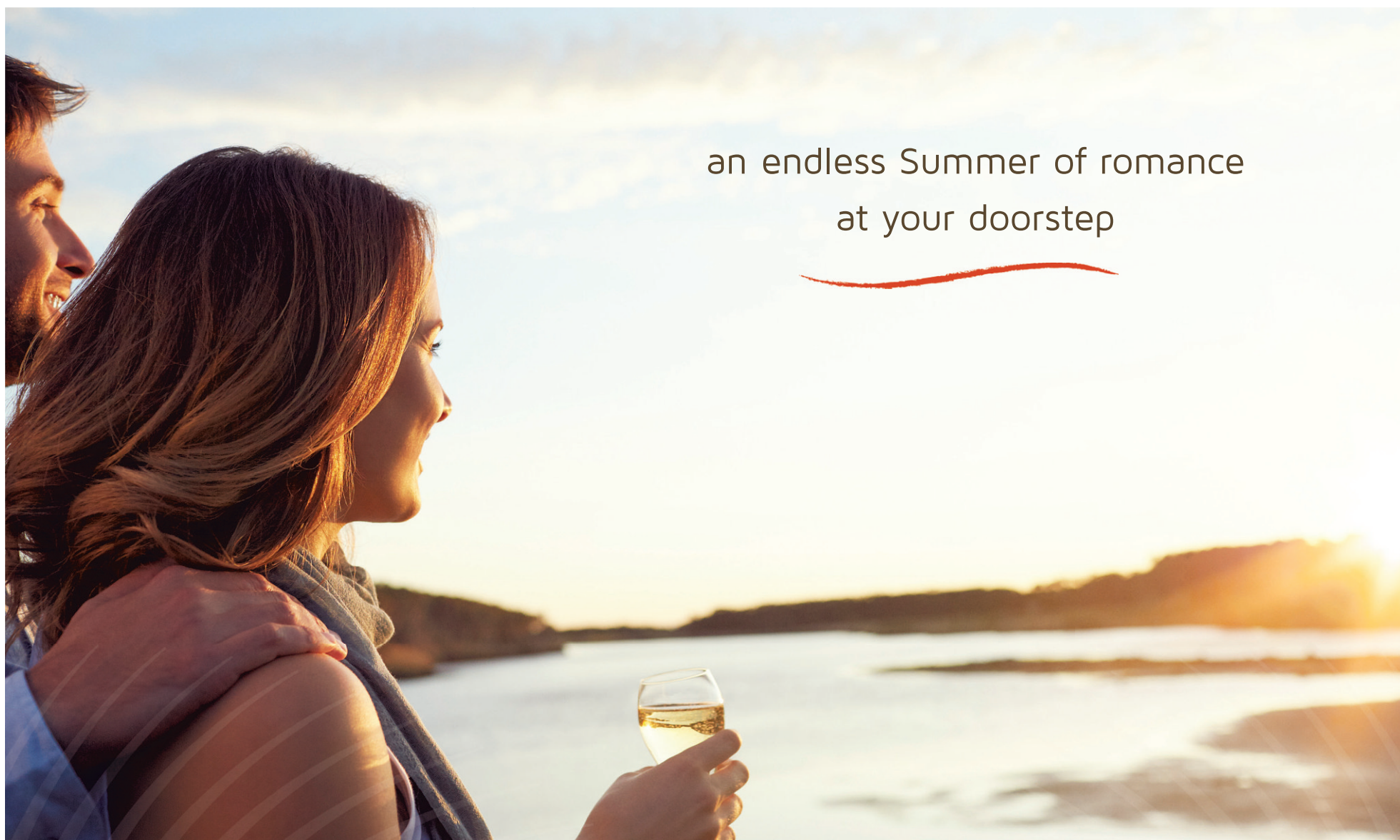
Pop that cork @ Bennelong

Having won our hearts with his food at Quay (which is offering a \$295 per person five-course Valentine’s Day feast), executive chef Peter Gilmore is taking the food at Bennelong to beautiful heights. This is a big room. And lunch or dinner here is a big deal. So take your cues from the food and dress up, not down. Warning: your date may

Love on a plate (from left): Abundance at Giro Osteria; elegance at Bistro Moncur; lobster bisque at Bistro32.

Pictures: Manuele Rinaldi, Mark Stanley, Carla Grossetti

expect you to put a ring on it when she finds out you’ve dropped a wad of cash (\$200 per person) on the four-course set menu. A great place for Valentine’s Day virgins to start a love affair with the Hallmark holiday. Sydney Opera House, Bennelong Point, 9240 8000, bennelong.com.au; Quay, 3 Overseas Passenger Terminal, George Street & Argyle Street, The Rocks, 9251 5600, quay.com.au



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