

# where New York now

Romantic rendezvous, plus other great ideas for an NYC lovefest.



SWEET DATES

## THE GIFT OF DOING

You're in the Big Apple for Valentine's Day: Why not give the gift of a shared experience?

BY LEE HOWARD

Leanne Cope and Robert Fairchild in "An American in Paris" on Broadway

 New York

It usually takes one person less than a minute to unwrap a present, but a shared memory of two people enjoying an experience together is there to stay. And when it comes to a romantic gift, describing a product to friends isn't half the fun as telling the story of the time you went ice-skating in Manhattan, created a bespoke scent for two in TriBeCa, found Parisian-style love in New York or took a SoHo culinary tour. That's one reason why experiential gifts that keep on giving are so memorable.

"Valentine's Day is a commercial holiday: So, we like to take the pressure off finding the perfect thing for the perfect person," says Joyce Weinberg, founder of City Food Tours, whose clients, both locals and visitors, find happiness through tasting and sightseeing tours of the Big Apple. "My best advice is to have fun, treat yourself to some high-quality decadence and explore New York at the same time." Here are several romantic notions to savor in pairs.

On Broadway, l'amour looks and sounds like the Tony Award-winning show **"An American in Paris."** Parisian landmark settings provide a romantic backdrop for the dance musical about an American and a young French woman as the resilient City of Light emerges from wartime occupation. Love songs such as "S Wonderful" and "They Can't Take That Away From Me" are courtesy of Brooklyn-born composer George Gershwin, who fell in love with Paris in the 1920s. *Palace Theatre, 1564 Broadway, 877.250.2929, americaninparisbroadway.com*

The Palace Theatre is also where American-born singer Josephine Baker once performed, decades after the American star entranced Paris in the 1920s with her risqué act. Book a table at **Chez Josephine**, the Theater District French restaurant and piano bar opened in her honor in 1986 by a close family member. It serves a Valentine's Day menu and a cocktail, J'ai Deux Amours (Cointreau, Campari and orange juice topped with champagne), named after the song that mentions her two loves: "my country and Paris." *414 W. 42nd St., 212.954.1925, chezjosephine.com*

For those enamored with fragrance, couples can create their own at **The Scentarium**, with the help of mix master Sue Phillips, who's been in the business for over 25 years and has developed perfumes and colognes for Tiffany & Co. and Burberry. She trademarked "scentertainment," the name given to the fun and personalized process of choosing a bespoke scent in her TriBeCa atelier. Intimate, hour-long fragrance workshops for two, enjoyed with a glass of wine or champagne, can be booked in advance (give at least 24 hours' notice). They start with a personality test and take an olfactory journey through 18 blends until just the right notes—fresh, floral, woody, oriental or otherwise—are selected and bottled, air-travel-friendly size and upward, ready to go or to be shipped. Smells trigger

PHOTOS: "AN AMERICAN IN PARIS," ©2014, ANGELA STERLING; VOILÀ CHOCOLAT, CHRISTOPHE TOURY



Confections from Voilà Chocolat

"On Valentine's Day, expert guides talk about the history—and aphrodisiac properties—of chocolate."

memories, so relive your New York trip every time a bottle is reordered and opened. *85 Franklin St., 917.449.1134, scenterprises.com*

Also Downtown, follow your nose to **The Setai Club**, where, throughout February, couples can share a 30-minute spa bath and, in the same suite, follow it with a 60-minute aromatherapy dual massage, using neroli and rose oils. Champagne and chocolates are part of the package to complete a blissful, seductive visit. *40 Broad St., 212.792.6193, setaiclubnewyork.com*

Culinary tourism is hotter than it's ever been and rarely sweeter than on the two-hour Chocolate, Dessert and Drink Tour, run by the aforementioned **City Food Tours**, where you can explore specialty shops in less touristy areas of SoHo and NoLiTa. Couples in small, guided groups, and on foot, make several stops at fine chocolatiers and delicious bakeries as well as sampling wine or craft beer. On Valentine's Day weekend (Feb. 13-15), expert guides talk about these passionate products from artisanal vendors as well as the history—and aphrodisiac properties—of chocolate. *Cityfoodtours.com, 212.535.8687*

Drop by **Voilà Chocolat** between Feb. 9 and 14 to personally handcraft chocolates together, adding Valentine's Day touches, decorating truffles, lollipops, dipped strawberries and other treats in love-themed patterns or words.





Ricotta cannoli at The Modern

Or buy bonbons encased in an edible heart-shaped box. 221 W. 79th St., 212.902.8799, [voila-chocolat.com](http://voila-chocolat.com)

For many, Times Square is the beating heart of New York City, pulsating with energy and electricity, and, from Feb. 9 to March 6, it's home to **"Heart of Hearts,"** a public art installation. Nine golden, mirrored hearts, each over 10 feet tall, reflect the square's brightly colored lights and create a fun, ringed pavilion with "kissing booths." *Father Duffy Square, btw W. 46th and W. 47th sts., [timessquarenyc.org](http://timessquarenyc.org)*

A few blocks north, the word "love"—spelled out in Robert Indiana's pop-art sculpture (*Sixth Ave. & W. 55th St.*)—guides the way to the **Museum of Modern Art** for a Valentine Tour (check with museum on dates) on which art historians reveal the stories behind romantic masterworks such as van Gogh's "The Starry Night" and Matisse's "Dance."

11 W. 53rd St., 212.708.9400, [moma.org](http://moma.org). **The Modern** restaurant in the museum offers a Valentine's Day menu. 9 W. 53rd St., 212.333.1220, [modernnyc.com](http://modernnyc.com)

If you're in the mood for a park with a twist, bundle up and head to the **High Line**, approximately 1.5 miles of elevated urban greenway dotted with art installations. Crowded in the summer, it's tranquil in the winter (but closed when icy) and makes for a romantic stroll with river and city skyline views above Chelsea's art galleries and down to the bustling Meatpacking District. *Enter at W. 34th St. and 12th ave., 212.500.6035, [thehighline.org](http://thehighline.org)*. Afterward, get cozy and warm with high tea at the **Bosie Tea Parlor**, a 15-minute walk away in Greenwich Village. Enjoy a glass of champagne and traditional English scones with clotted cream and jam, together with pastries and sandwiches

PHOTO: RICOTTA CANNOLI, NATHAN RAWLINSON



Grab a hot chocolate before a skate at The Rink at Rockefeller Center.

"People say that Paris is the City of Love, but we tend to think otherwise."

served on a tiered stand. A tea specialist can help you select from a choice of over 85 loose-leaf teas. Reserve a spot on Valentine's Day to try the rarely served Love Tea—black tea flavored with rose, chocolate, pistachio and cinnamon. Call three days ahead to arrange flowers and a gift basket. 10 Morton St., 212.352.9900, [bosienyc.com](http://bosienyc.com)

A tradition for over 80 years, ice-skating on **The Rink at Rockefeller Center** is a truly New York experience. Skating duos, hand in hand, circle the ice together, overlooked by the Art Deco-style landmark in Midtown. Book ahead for a little private time on the rink with the Platinum Engagement-on-Ice package. You can even choose the right music for when (one of) you bends down on one knee, perfectly poised, of course, and pops the question. A waiter will gladly pop the champagne, since you two will be busy. Newly engaged, you then glide over to **The Sea Grill** for a five-course chef's tasting menu to celebrate. Reserve a rinkside table in advance, a dozen roses and a bottle of Veuve Clicquot (all part of the package) to wrap up the most magical of experiences. *The Rink: Fifth Ave., btw 49th and 50th sts., 212.332.7654, [rockefellercenter.com](http://rockefellercenter.com); The Sea Grill: 19 W. 49th St., 212.332.7610, [patinagroup.com](http://patinagroup.com)*

People say that Paris is the City of Love, but we tend to think otherwise.



Try a luxurious massage at The Setai Club.

PHOTO: MAN GETTING MASSAGE, COURTESY ISTOCK



# Valentine's Day Diet

Whether you love digging into a juicy T-bone steak, thrive on fresh, seasonal veggies or have a diet that falls somewhere in between, New York City's restaurants will find a way to please your palate. The Where editorial team sampled nine sexy restaurants—three each for vegetarians, omnivores and carnivores—to find the perfect place for a date, no matter your sweetheart's dietary preferences.

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VEGETARIANS



The Lower East Side's **Dirt Candy** cooks up American Nouveau cuisine entirely out of plant-based ingredients in an intimate red-and-white setting. Chef Amanda Cohen loves playing with whimsical presentations, as seen in the rainbow cauliflower curry (*above*) and multicolored dinner rolls, served in a flower pot. 86 Allen St., 212.228.7732, [dirtcandynyc.com](http://dirtcandynyc.com)

With a softly-lit upscale space on the Upper East Side and a menu full of meat-free versions of eclectic multicultural dishes, **Candle 79** provides an oasis for vegans. Entrées like seitan piccata and portobello steak are main-course wins, but be sure to start off with the tender pomegranate-barbecue seitan skewers. 154 E. 79th St., 212.537.7179, [candle79.com](http://candle79.com)

Kick off your shoes for gourmet Korean dining at **Hangawi**. Tuck your bare feet under the sunken tables, then tuck into veggie-packed bibimbap, organic maitake mushrooms and wild mountain roots in a serene setting. 12 E. 32nd St., 212.213.0077, [hangawirestaurant.com](http://hangawirestaurant.com)—Joni Sweet

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OMNIVORES



With thousands of restaurants, NYC is the culinary epicenter for options. Several spots offer this same flexibility on one menu—perfect for varying dietary preferences or keeping a healthy balance. The menu at West Village charmer **Ellary's Greens** caters to a wide range of taste buds, from bacon-crazed (bacon mac & cheese) to vegan (seasonal mushroom salad) to pescatarian (shrimp scampi, *above*). 33 Carmine St., 212.920.5072, [ellarysgreens.com](http://ellarysgreens.com)

Swank Midtown restaurant **Glass House Tavern** features both veggie-based mains, such as quinoa paella with ginger-root vegetables, mint and tarragon; and grilled steaks. 252 W. 47th St., 212.730.4800, [glasshousetavern.com](http://glasshousetavern.com)

**Copper Kettle Kitchen's** rustic dining room is a cozy option for chilly nights. The menu is ideal for sharing, with two-person entrées (Dijon-crustied rack of lamb) and hearty vegetarian dishes (eggplant "meatballs"). 1471 Second Ave., 212.744.1100, [copperkettlekitchen.com](http://copperkettlekitchen.com)—Lorraine Rubio

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CARNIVORES



There are tons of places in NYC for a fine steak, so this month, why not also seek out one with a romantic ambience? The plush, elegant **Delmonico's** fits the bill here, a spot which also has a historic twist: Opened in 1837, its chefs are credited with inventing lobster Newburg, eggs Benedict and baked Alaska. And the dry-aged steaks (*above*) are pretty awesome, too. 56 Beaver St., 212.509.1144, [delmonicosny.com](http://delmonicosny.com)

For a Midtown date spot, I always gravitate to **Del Frisco's**: I love the gorgeous, soaring bi-level space; the cordial waitstaff, who insist you cut into your steak to ensure it has been cooked to your liking; and the maque choux corn side dish, which never fails to knock my socks off. 1221 Sixth Ave., 212.575.5129, [delfriscos.com](http://delfriscos.com)

I simply love **Parlor Steak & Fish**, an intimate, neighborhoody spot with supremely fine steaks and simple sides that thrill, such as rich creamed spinach and yummy fried onions. 1600 Third Ave., 212.423.5888, [parlorsteakandfish.com](http://parlorsteakandfish.com)—Lois Levine

PHOTOS: DIRT CANDY; EVAN SUNG; SHRIMP SCAMPI; ELLARY'S GREEN/ZANDER TAKETOMO

# Thrill of the Chill

**Baby, it's cold outside. And inside Minus5 Ice Bar, NYC's only deep-freeze cocktail lounge. Cheers!**

At this time of year, plenty of New York bars beckon with fireplaces ablaze and hot toddies at the ready. So, am I being perverse when I steer you away from "warm and cozy" and point you in the direction of the polar opposite: **Minus5 Ice Bar** in Midtown, where the thermostat is always set at minus 5 degrees Celsius (23 degrees Fahrenheit)?

No way. New York is about memorable experiences, and Minus5 is among the unforgettables.

Its walls, benches, tables, sculptures, chandeliers and drinking glasses are all made from ice—100 tons of it. And at half a million dollars, this frozen water doesn't come cheap. Master carvers recently chiseled the 3,000-square-foot space into an homage to the city, with a nook devoted to Andy Warhol (*above*), NYC's ultimate cool cat, and a frieze



dedicated to Broadway hits "The Lion King," "Hamilton" and a score more. You can pose on the Statue of Liberty throne and be an Instagram smash, or simply chill with a vodka-based cocktail like The Big Apple (Three Olives vodka, Sour Apple Pucker, sweet-and-sour mix). And lest you shiver, insulated parkas and gloves are supplied for maximum comfort. *New York Hilton Midtown*, 1335 Sixth Ave., 212.757.4610, [minus5experience.com](http://minus5experience.com)—Francis Lewis

# Champagne and Diamonds

**A regular Where magazine contributor shares one splendid day.**

BY BRIAN SCOTT LIPTON » In February, the month devoted to St. Valentine, I spend at least one day making sure I can fulfill my own heart's desires—as well as those of the one I love. And one of the best areas to make these wishes come true, to quote pop goddess Petula Clark, is "downtown." Since I am never exactly sure what culinary cravings may strike, my first stop for lunch is the charming **Gansevoort Market** (52 Gansevoort St., no phone, [gansmarket.com](http://gansmarket.com)), the rustic food hall where I can sample dozens of national (and international) delicacies, from a decadent all-American lobster roll to terrific Thai offerings, savory and sweet French crepes, Italian gelato and even authentic Greek yogurt! (I try not to do all of these at one sitting.) With my tummy fully satisfied, I then set out to indulge my passion for beautiful bling, and there's no better place than **Doyle & Doyle** (412 W. 13th St., 212.677.9991, [doyleanddoyle.com](http://doyleanddoyle.com)). With its stunning selection of hand-chosen vintage and antique jewelry encased in vitrines, the shop may resemble a museum, but all of its sparkling wares are for sale. Enraptured by the romantic mood, who could resist one of its magnificent heart-shaped lockets, whether festooned with diamonds (*left*) or making a simple statement of love in 14-karat gold? To top off the outing, some bubbly is always in order, so I make my way to **Anfora** (34 Eighth Ave., 212.518.2722, [anforanyc.com](http://anforanyc.com)), the stylish yet comfortable wine bar with a great array of vintages on hand, both by the glass and the bottle, where I can toast to the pursuit of great food, gorgeous jewelry and true happiness.

