



As Valentine's Day approaches, many people's thoughts turn to flowers and candlelit dinners but not to awkward moments when a date takes a cell phone call at the table or long pauses when the check comes.

Yet this can be the reality for so many would-be romantics.

Good etiquette says that one's attention should be undivided when having dinner with another person. This goes double when on a date, and triple when the stakes are high, such as on Valentine's Day.

Cell phones and smart phones aren't rude devices per se, but when put in the hands of people who forget to switch them off while on a date, they become the object of dark stares and raised eyebrows.

The same goes for texting. Why reach out to or respond to another person on such an intimate, romantic evening?

It's often not about people being intentionally rude, but rather forgetting about those around them when the Pavlovian need to answer a beeping smart phone calls.

Reuters: Valentine's Day Survival Guide

Written by Anna Post

Splitting the check, fondly known as "going Dutch" in days gone by, is incredibly common today and nothing to be ashamed of. It is also still fair to say that when in doubt, whoever does the asking, does the paying.

That said, some women like having their meal paid for, others don't. There is no right answer anymore, but there is a right way of going about paying, whatever the arrangement.

The key is for couples to establish how the bill will be paid upfront, long before the waiter is waiting.

It's not wrong to offer to pay or chip in, but it's best to stop short of fighting over the check. This distracts from the evening and puts the focus on money -- not the most romantic (or polite) of topics.

In the past, Valentine's Day could be dicey for men. Handled well, they are the hero of the hour. Handled poorly, and welcome to the dog house.

These days, taking on the arrangements is often an equal-opportunity endeavor. No matter who takes charge, keep in mind a few things:

- If you can't cook, make reservations. The sooner the better. The best and most popular restaurants will book up well in advance. Don't forget to arrange for a babysitter, too.
- Get the card now. Don't wait till the last minute when the selection includes only the most ridiculous and mushy sentiments.
- Say it with flowers. When in doubt, buying a spouse or significant other flowers is still the most time-honored choice. Classic red roses represent love or passion, while pink, yellow, and white each send various messages of admiration, happiness, and friendship. Even better than roses? Remembering the recipient's favorite kind of flower.
- Special and meaningful doesn't have to mean expensive. Anyone on a tight budget should plan accordingly. It's not sexy to have a credit card declined, and it is almost guaranteed to break the mood. Instead, cook a romantic dinner at home. Candles and chocolates are within most budgets and can set the tone for a romantic evening. It takes thought, not money, to pen love notes, choose a romantic movie to watch, or play "your song" over dessert.

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- Mind your table manners. Nothing will ruin the evening faster than dates who chew with their mouth open or hold their fork like a medieval weapon. Gentlemen: hold the door, pull out her chair, be prepared to order bubbly and initiate dinner conversation. If it's a new relationship, don't let nerves get in the way of smiling and making eye contact.
- Don't believe the hype. Even when a spouse or significant other doesn't buy into all the V-Day propaganda, use the occasion as a chance to acknowledge how much she or he is loved and appreciated.

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