



VALENTINE'S DAY RESERVATIONS

A Guide to Getting in to Atlanta's Most Romantic Restaurants on the Busiest Night of the Year

[WRITTEN BY JULA JANE]

Some say spontaneity is the spice of life and in most cases that's true — except on Valentine's Day. On this special day, it's imperative to plan ahead. Atlanta is known for its abundance of quality restaurants and culinary delights. Though the choices are limitless, the available seats are not. If you want to have the best table in town, book it as soon as possible. You'll be a hero in your sweetheart's eyes when you announce your dinner reservations at the most romantic and sought-after restaurant in Atlanta. Here's the inside scoop on where to go, how to get in, and what makes it so special.



Bon Appetit

Seduce your sweetheart with Bistro VG's most decadent Chicken Liver "Faux Gras" and a bottle of Dom Perignon '98 and you'll hear, "I'm tasting stars!" These were the words of the Benedictine monk, Dom Perignon himself, as he first discovered Champagne. Reveal this little secret to impress your loved one even further. One thing to know about this utterly fabulous restaurant is that it's in high demand and if you want to experience its full-flavored offerings you must plan ahead — way ahead. They require reservations and often book up weeks in advance. Bistro VG boasts many different settings including the cozy lounge featuring the center stage chef's table and banquet window-seating, the communal bar flanked by a warm fireplace and explosive laughter, plus the main dining room designed to tempt your palate. The greatest secret at Bistro VG is the lotus room nestled off in a private nook that seats 10 but would be perfect for two. The food is European and absolutely delightful, plus you'll be spoiled with their Valentine's Day features — lobster and caviar.

BISTRO VG (formerly Van Gogh's)
70 West Crossville Road
Roswell
770-993-1156
www.knowwheretogogh.com
Valentine's Day Dinner Hours: 5 – 10 p.m.



Swept Away

One can't help but fall in love all over again while strolling along the Chattahoochee River, Champagne glass in one hand and the touch of your soul mate in the other. It's one of the most romantic settings in all of Atlanta and can be found at Canoe, the much acclaimed restaurant in historic Vinings. Best known for its Modern American cuisine and exceptional service, Canoe will seduce and captivate you. You have your choice of plush booths or accessible tables in the rustic yet elegant dining room or out on the patio overlooking lush gardens and mesmerizing water. The Chef has opted to do a special *a la carte* menu for Valentine's Day. If you enjoy their regular menu of Seared Yellowfin Tuna, Sage Roasted Pheasant and Grilled Atlantic Salmon, then you'll surely love what's in store for you. I would tell you exactly what to expect, but it's a surprise. The wine list will remain the same — full-bodied — and as for the desserts, I assure you, you will be in heaven. Canoe has been inducted into *Nation's Restaurant News* 2005 Fine Dining Hall of Fame, and it will undoubtedly be inducted into your memory. You are invited and welcome to float away with Canoe this Valentine's Day, but only if you have a reservation.



CANOE

4199 Paces Ferry Road, NW
Atlanta
770-432-2663
www.canoeatl.com
Valentine's Day Dinner Hours: 5 – 11 p.m.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CANOE

No Reservations

Sweet music to a procrastinator's ears, "You are most welcome, no reservations required." This is the song that will be played over and over on Valentine's Day at Café Intermezzo in Dunwoody and in Atlanta. The ambience is that of a European café — brick walls, intimate tables for two, dim lighting, candles on every table, and sounds from abroad. Though they have a full menu of pastas, salads, soups and sandwiches, the real treat is found behind glass in a delightful pastry presentation. For a touch of entertainment, ask the tour guide for a description of all 70 selections. He'll be ever so happy to oblige. A sweet is never complete without an after dinner drink or coffee, and lucky for you, the beverage book has hundreds of options. Whether you're looking to warm your heart or seduce your date, you'll be more than satisfied with your choices. Café Intermezzo can be enjoyed so many ways on Valentine's Day — lunch, dinner or a late night affair — or, if you want to spend the entire day with your sweetheart, start with breakfast. The Egg and Cheese Crepe is delicious and the Smoked Salmon Benedict, divine.



CAFÉ INTERMEZZO

4505 Ashford-Dunwoody Road
Dunwoody
770-396-1344

1845 Peachtree Road
Atlanta
404-355-0411

www.cafeintermezzo.com
Valentine's Day Hours: 10 a.m. – 2 a.m.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAFÉ INTERMEZZO



PHOTO COURTESY OF LA GROTTA RISTORANTE

Ti Amo. Mangia!

La Grotta Ristorante, an Atlanta staple for 24 years and recipient of the AAA Four Diamond Award 14 years running, is by far one of the best choices to sweep someone off his/her feet. Specializing in Northern Italian and regional cuisine, La Grotta is pleased to present you with a four-course set menu on Valentine's Day that is sure to please — and of course, an impressive wine list by the glass or by the bottle. Whether you live inside the Perimeter or out, La Grotta is within reach. They have two locations each with an abundance of charm. Walk among the gardens or, if you choose the Dunwoody location, enjoy the seductive sounds of the waterfall. The choice is yours. But, keep in mind, reservations are a must. Aware of the demand, the regulars reserve a table as early as the day after Thanksgiving, but don't lose hope. That perfect table in the corner by the window may still be available if you call today.

LA GROTTA RISTORANTE

4355 Ashford Dunwoody Road, N.E.
Dunwoody
770-395-9925

2637 Peachtree Road, N.E.
Buckhead
404-231-1368

www.lagrottaatlanta.com
Valentine's Day Hours: 5 – 10 p.m.

A Night to Remember

Roses? Check. Chocolates? Check. Dinner reservations? Oops. If you forgot to make reservations for Valentine's Day dinner don't beat yourself up — you're not alone. There are thousands of people out there hearing the same thing, "I'm sorry, we're booked." I have a fantastic solution for you — Stoney River. They don't take reservations, it's first come, first served, which means: You're in! You just might not be in right away. Have a plan B — say Champagne at the bar. No woman in her right mind will object to waiting an hour or so for a table if she's sipping Champagne and cuddling with her man beside a warm fireplace. And it just so happens, Stoney River has the best fireplaces around. What luck! Once you're nestled happily in your cushy booth or playing footsies at a table with your darling, take a moment to peruse the full menu. You can choose from their list of legendary steaks — Prime Rib, New York Strip, Center Cut Sirloin, or the ladies' favorite, Lodge Filet. Or, if you prefer, select one of their gourmet entrées — Sautéed Sea Bass, Sage-Roasted Chicken Breast, or, for the more adventurous soul, the Pecan-Encrusted Swordfish. You simply can't go wrong. Everything is delicious. Valentine's Day just wouldn't be the same without something chocolate on your plate. May I suggest the Triple-Layer Chocolate Ganache Cake served with chilled shot glasses of milk? Need I say more? Happy Valentine's Day.



PHOTO COURTESY OF STONEY RIVER

STONEY RIVER

1640 Cumberland Mall
Atlanta
678-305-9229

Valentine's Day Dinner Hours:
4 – 10 p.m.

5800 State Bridge Road
Duluth
770-476-0102

Valentine's Day Dinner Hours:
5 – 10:30 p.m.

10524 Alpharetta Hwy.
Roswell
678-461-7900

Valentine's Day Dinner Hours:
5 – 10 p.m.

www.stoneyriver.com



A Blessing

It's no secret that women love to shop and love to be wined and dined, and on Valentine's Day, they want all of the above. Gentlemen, there's a fantastic place to make her dreams come true — Grace/17.20 at The Forum in Norcross. Spoil your sweetie by beginning the evening with a quick shopping spree at Victoria's Secret — Happy Valentine's Day to you, too — followed by a quick trip to Spa Sydell. Load up on the bath salts and massaging oils (you can thank me later), then walk hand-in-hand over to the elegant restaurant known as Grace/17.20. The mood is romantic, the food delicious, and the prices realistic. The Contemporary American menu includes their famous Grilled White Marble Pork Chop and Double Crab Cake plus some very special additions just for Valentine's Day. Sip wine, whisper sweet nothings and know one thing — you made her the happiest woman in the world. I know what you're thinking, reservations required. Not this time. Walk-ins are welcome, but reservations are preferred.



PHOTO COURTESY OF GRACE/17.20

GRACE/17.20

5155 Peachtree Pkwy.
Norcross
678-421-1720

www.grace1720.com

Valentine's Day Hours: 5 – 11 p.m.



GRAPE EXPECTATIONS

Visit These Atlanta Restaurants for Unique, Innovative Wine Experiences

[Written By Katie Kelly Bell]

You've made the reservations, hired the sitter and scouted the menu. The food will be excellent, and thanks to our restaurant wine pioneers, the wine list will be just as exciting ... making Valentine's Day even more magical. Consider some of these hotspots for a night on the town vine.



TWO Urban Licks

Glancing around at the convivial crowd clustered at the bar at TWO Urban Licks it's clear as to why everyone is drinking wine. It's because of the barrels. TWO purchases wine by the barrel, not by the bottle. Hence pours are offered in sizes ranging from a small taste to a whopping carafe so you aren't required to commit for the evening to something you thought you'd enjoy. This is a place where wine is not a fussy concept, but rather an experimental experience. Play around with the interesting choices on the list and order several mini-tastes. The majority of the wine is domestic with the exception of sparkling wines and no bottle is priced over \$50. The concept here is the only one in the city. (Atlanta, 404-522-4622, www.twourbanlicks.com)

Vine's

Vine's wine cellar showcases wines from around the world that are of exceptional quality and value. With more than 450 varieties, more than 30 available by the glass, and the largest half-bottle selection in all of Atlanta, Vine has a wine to satisfy every palate. The 16-page wine list includes heavy hitters such as Opus One, Duckhorn and Shafer Cabernet Sauvignon; even the pickiest client will be impressed. (Atlanta, 404-892-2393, www.vinerestaurant.com)

SoHo

The attentive staff at SoHo will gladly guide you through their list of more than 80 wines by the glass (with an emphasis on New World selections). Pours are offered in 3- or 6-ounce portions. The list is arranged from lighter bodied wines to fuller bodied wines for easier interpretation. The menu's wine pairing suggestions are also a nice touch. (Atlanta, 770-801-0069, www.sohoatlanta.com)

Ecco

If you can tear yourself away from the amazing chow at this Midtown eatery, you'll be equally impressed with the eclectic wine list. Expect bottlings that cannot be found anywhere in the city and examples of varietals that no other restaurant offers by the glass. Taking care to scour the wine world for magnificent selections that are only offered at Ecco (such as the Joel Gott Syrah and La Pisara Primitivo), this is the place to sample something rare and unusual. (Atlanta, 404-347-9555, www.ecco-atlanta.com)

The Grape

The Grape has done a commendable job invigorating the wine bar concept in Atlanta. Enjoy a full menu and fun tasting options such as the Grapes by the Bunch (where guests can sample a variety of wines for a single price). More than 120 wines by the glass are served, including Oriel Wines, small-batch bottlings produced by winemakers all over the world, which are unique to The Grape and offer good examples of many of the world's varietals including: Riesling, Shiraz, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Cabernet Sauvignon. The Grape offers six Atlanta area locations. (www.yourgrape.com)



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE GRAPE

ENO

Long before wine (and Midtown) was "hot" Doug Strickland brought ENO to the rescue, tempting palates with amazing food and a lengthy list of wines. Prices tend to be a trifle steep, but it's worth the trouble in order to have access to ENO's lengthy list of boutique, highly allocated wines. Pop into the adjacent wine shop, the Barrelman for a bottle to take home after dinner. (Atlanta, 404-685-3191, www.enorestaurant.com)