

Loving the #AmExExperience is easy this Valentine's Day, when good food meets great romance

Issued by [OnPoint PR](#)

2 Feb 2018

This Valentine's Day, American Express is a worthy companion at Jena Dover and Mala Bryan's eight favourite award-winning tables in Johannesburg and Cape Town.



With a trusted lifestyle companion in her purse, Jena Dover takes us down memory lane to cherished romantic moments in her favourite restaurants, and Mala Bryan breaks down where good food will mean great romance for you, Cupid, and a loved one this Valentine's Day.

Jena Dover

What's your favourite romantic memory in a restaurant and which restaurant was it in?

For a first date, we went to a restaurant called Bottega Café in Parkhurst. My date insisted that we order our meal backwards, so we began with desert. He knew I have a deep intolerance toward celery, so as a joke, pre-requested that the staff deliver various forms of celery – think chopped, pureed, etc. - on a plate for my main meal. I found it hilarious; and that's important because humour is the first quality I look for in a partner.

What are the qualities you look for in a restaurant venue when picking one for a date?

I prefer romantic dates in a cozy, private and intimate restaurant so that I can get to know my date without contending with the chaos and noise of a larger spaces. Good service and good food are very important because if either of those items are not at least satisfactory, it could ruin our evening. It is important to put thought into the restaurant you choose because I notice the little things; and effort is attractive.

What is a good example of your favourite restaurant delivering one ambience and romantic for you on a night out with bae?

I really love Pigalle in Sandton for the shellfish. I love Silver Orange Bistro near Hartbeesport for their desert options. I don't often ask for changes to the dishes at Pigalle because the food is excellent all round, but I have no doubt that they would be willing to accommodate any requests. The standard of service at both institutions is sublime. I'm a stickler for good service.

What's the romantic move you can always count on to seize the bae when on a first date?

I make a rose out of paper serviettes (only for the people I like). What can I say? I'm a nerd. I also wear a stunning outfit and put on some light, elegant but memorable perfume. That is it really. My charm is sufficient.

What's your favourite restaurant?

Pigalle in Sandton and Silver Orange Bistro in Hartbeesport.

Mala Bryan

What's the one thing you look for in a restaurant venue when you're picking one for a date? Staff, service, the ambience of the restaurant, food, the romance factor.

When picking a restaurant for a date, I love going to places that feel very intimate. Food is very important to me, so I usually start my selection process there.

Personally, I prefer restaurants with staff who go the extra mile when they notice that a couple is out on a romantic dinner. It is the little extra gestures, attention to detail, the cheerful smile and excellent service that really make it all worthwhile for me. It is things like that that make it memorable and would definitely send me back to that restaurant.

What's your number one romantic move when on a date with bae?

My number one romantic move would be playing footsie under the table. It screams teenage romance and how amazing were those times!

Name your top restaurant.

My top restaurant, hands down, would be 95 Keerom, an Italian restaurant in Cape Town. They have it all. Amazing food and great ambience. Especially in the downstairs area which is very private and cosy. A perfect spot for a classic romantic dinner.

Johannesburg:

Signature

Marbel

Pigalle Sandton

Silver Orange Bistro in Hartbeesport

Cape Town:

Nobu

Kloof Street House

The Delaire Graff Restaurant

95 @ Morgenster

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