



Animal instinct

Ask a man to plan ahead and he's more likely to think about what he's going to eat and drink on Valentine's night than what he's going to wear. But it's not just the woman who should feel foxy on a date...

By Sanaya Pavri
Special to GN Focus

Gentlemen, Valentine's Day is a big deal. That's not news to anyone. For the longest time it has been a ritual celebration of love, exchanging of gifts, planning a romantic evening, day or weekend. In short, it's a logistical nightmare waiting to implode. And we all know that women organise these days with more attention and rigour than the average guy ever could – they are just built that way!

So while you try your best to plan everything about the evening, chances are you will think least about what you wear. But what you wear can say things about you, on your behalf. And no, that doesn't mean jumping on to the hipster trend with a lumberjack shirt.

Here are our tips:

Dress with intent

How casual you keep things depends on how important you want this day to be, says Mahir Ali, Artistic Director and Head of Operations at bespoke tailoring brand Ascots & Chapels. "If you're celebrating a milestone or popping the question, make sure to wear a well-fitted suit," he says. "Keep it sharp and classic. Nothing builds anticipation like a crisp new suit when you're on a romantic dinner."

If you aren't planning anything big, pair a jacket with denims and a pocket square to avoid sending the wrong signals.

Marissa Woods, Founder of the Dubai-based fashion and style consultancy Image Factor, suggests a look that's effortless yet still packs a punch with luxury fabrics and simple cuts.

"Cashmere and cotton collarless V-neck sweaters and a rich silk or velvet jacket teamed with casual dark jeans is the relaxed-meets-luxury comfort choice," she says.

So think Zac Efron instead of George Clooney.

Or if you want to keep it casual, wear a waistcoat and keep the shirt interesting. "But remember, a black waistcoat can make you look like the wait staff," says Ali.



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Steer clear of trends

Designers across the world are pushing the envelope. But let's face it, not every trend is for each of us. Checks can overwhelm stocky frames, skinny trousers can be unflattering to very slim legs and not many of us can mix and match prints with bold colours.

So before you follow an expert's advice, think hard about how you feel about sporting a look, try it on in the shop and get the opinion of a trusted friend.

Perhaps you could take a leaf out of Johnny Depp's book (above). For a romantic occasion or dinner, he follows the rules of formal dressing but adds some personality, showing a resistance to conformity and authority, says Woods.

"The white dinner suit, leather wristbands, dark shades, unique shoe designs with spats that make him 1930s American gangster, combined with intentionally messy hair and waistcoat, all make for a 'refined intellect but with rough edges' message to any potential admirer," she says.

Experiment with colour

There was a time when being in love meant wearing a red shirt. Now you can wear a red suit – Dolce and Gabbana's matador-inspired line put its full weight behind fiery flamenco red, showing it in suiting, oversized hoodies and shirting. On occasions such as Valentine's Day,



Mahir Ali
Ascots & Chapels



Marissa Wood
Image Factor

however, you don't want to channel the catwalk too literally. Now the only reason to be wearing red at a hot restaurant is if you are part of the entertainment for the evening.

Take a cue from Savile Row tailor Richard James, who created a line in desert tones for spring, livened up by bright pops of fuchsia, orange and turquoise.

Once again, find out what colour suits you. If you don't want to go to a colour consultant, research the best shades for your skin tone, hair and eyes on the internet. You might be surprised at what you discover and the impact it could have on your look!

If you're recommended to wear a colour such as a bold aubergine or burgundy, don't stress. You can use the shade in subtle accents such as contrasting shirt buttonholes, pocket squares or ties to express your colourful side.

Accessorise subtly

There's a chance a bow tie could make you look comedic, or the wrong shoes could make your style come crashing down and distract your date. Chunky jewellery won't turn you into Jay Z. So keep it subtle with collar pins, a statement lapel pin or bold cufflinks.

"The only rule with accessories is less is more. Period," says Ali.

Keep it comfortable

Of all the days in the year, this is one when all the attention needs to be around your date. So if it helps you to stay calm, choose to wear something you are comfortable in. "To look great you must feel great," Ali says. "The last thing you want is to be distracted or conscious about what you're wearing."

— With input from the
GN Focus team

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When it comes to accessories, less is most definitely more. So put that silk scarf, trilby or bow tie back in the box