

14 Places To Go and Things To Do to Keep the Romance Alive

A guide for the romantically impaired

By Erin Mantz

This spring, as Joe and Anne Gerrety of Bethesda were about to celebrate their first wedding anniversary, Joe decided to wow his wife with a gift that was unique, memorable and romantic. When Anne looked longingly at the orchids and calla lilies in their wedding photos, Joe started thinking—and acting. He headed to Bethesda Florist with a photograph of the bouquet and asked owner Tracy Callahan to recreate an arrangement with the same flowers to surprise his wife.

Anne was thrilled—and lucky. In an April 2006 study searching for the top cities where romance blooms for baby boomers, the Washington area placed just 29th—out of 50 metropolitan areas.

The study, by Sperling's BestPlaces.net (www.bestplaces.net), looked at marital status, sales of jewelry, candy, and flowers and opportunities for romantic activities such as ballroom dancing and fine dining. But, in fact, our area does offer plenty of opportunities for romance. It just takes a little imagination and an appreciation (like Joe's) of why keeping the romance alive is so important in a relationship. Here are 14 ideas to add a little fuel to the fire.

1. Surprise her with a fresh wedding bouquet. It helps if you plan ahead of time, advises Tracy Callahan of Bethesda Florist. As his customer Joe Gerrety discovered, some types of flowers have to ship in from faraway places; Gerrety was glad he took action once he got the idea and credits Callahan with moving the process along. “At the end of the day, I’m just a guy,” Gerrety says. If you can’t remember the exact kind and color of the original, grab a wedding photo.

Bethesda Florist
301- 654-7366
www.bethesdaflorist.com

Chevy Chase Florist
301-986-0986
www.chevychaseflorist.com

Kabloom Fallsgrove
Rockville
301-738-2336

2. Pamper yourselves with a personal chef. Arrange for a personal chef to make a dinner for two with your favorite food, candle-lit table, flowers and wine. (Some chefs include linens and dishes; some expect to use yours, so be sure to ask.) Even after 40 years of marriage, Naomi Henderson of Bethesda hired personal chef Lauren Mobley from Purple Mango in North Bethesda to do an all-pink Valentine's Day brunch for husband, Luc. “On a table covered with fresh pink rose petals, we munched on heart-shaped muffins with pink sprinkles

and sipped sparkling pink grapefruit juice in champagne flutes. Even the shrimp with grits was pink!” Naomi raves.

Chef Lauren Mobley
Purple Mango
North Bethesda
301-581-9667
www.purplemangofood.com

Bryan Davis
Chef Bryan’s Kitchen
The Kentlands, Gaithersburg
301-977-4707
www.bryanskitchen.com

3. Let the romance into your bedroom with feng shui. Certified feng shui expert Carol Olmstead of North Bethesda swears feng shui can set the stage for true romance. Who knew mismatched night tables can discourage equality in a relationship, or that hanging romantic artwork and displaying objects in pairs will symbolize your committed relationship? “When your surroundings are unbalanced, you’re too busy fighting your environment,” Olmstead says. She will visit your bedroom and ensure your artwork doesn’t stand alone or look bleak; or take out all non-couple photos and look under your bed to ensure shoes and luggage are not there (these symbolize you are walking away from your relationship). Karen Diamond of Bethesda hired Olmstead once all her furniture came in and renovations were done. “The energy in my house now supports romance,” Diamond insists.

Carol M. Olmstead
Feng Shui For Real Life
North Bethesda
301-922-0320
www.fengshuiforreallife.com

Kacy Paide
Silver Spring
202-262-1207
www.fengshuidc.com

Dr. Katherine Grace Morris
Psychology of Setting Associates
Chevy Chase
301-312-6640
www.psychologyofsetting.com

Barbara Finch
Barbara Finch Feng Shui and Chinese Astrology
Silver Spring

301-946-0108
www.finchshui.com

4. Dance, dance, dance. Back in 1941, thousands of couples flocked to the Spanish Ballroom at Glen Echo Park in Bethesda to dance to a 12-piece orchestra. Romance is still alive the restored dance hall, with live weekly music for waltzes, square dances, classes and more. Or, attend a “practice party” and learn Latin salsa and rumba at the Bethesda Dance Center and Ballroom. Many of owner Roy Legaspi’s clients are married couples, he says: “Some have been coming here for months, some for years. Many enjoy the social aspect and make new couple friends here.”

The Spanish Ballroom at Glen Echo Park
301-634-2222
www.glenechopark.org/dancing.htm

Bethesda Dance Center and Ballroom
301-718-2690
www.bethesdadancecenter.com

Joy of Motion Dance Center
Bethesda
301-986-0016
www.joyofmotion.org

5. Put on your chefs’ hats and cook together. Take a couples cooking class at L’Academie de Cuisine, in Bethesda. “Some of our classes are designed especially for couples, like ‘Two Cooking’ and ‘Date Night’” says Clarice Dionot, events coordinator for L’Academie. “Married chefs Brian and Sandy Patterson even teach our ‘Dinner Date’ class!” Or, take your sweetie to a cake decorating class at Bethesda’s Just Cakes or try “Baking 101” at CakeLove in Silver Spring.

L’Academie de Cuisine Recreational School
Bethesda
301-986-9490
www.lacademie.com/Recreational/Classes/cookingclasses.asp

Just Cakes
Bethesda
301-718-5111
www.justcakes.net

CakeLove
Silver Spring
301-565-2253
www.cakelove.com/services_classes.php

6. Steal away for a romantic night. Check out the “Summer Romance Package” at the Hyatt

Regency Bethesda, which features strawberries and champagne upon arrival, early check-in, late check-out and rose-petal turndown at night. “When you are staying outside your home, it gives you a kind of freedom,” says Mark Jennings, general manager of the Hyatt. Or indulge in the “Art of Celebrating Romance” package at D.C.’s Hotel Palomar. Soak in a tub for two in the Relaxation Suite, sip champagne in personalized flute glasses and get an artist’s couples sketch to remember the weekend. The Ritz-Carlton Georgetown’s “Disconnect to Re-connect” package takes everyday distractions away—you purposely do not get wireless access or use of the business center.

Hyatt Regency Bethesda - www.bethesda.hyatt.com/hyatt/hotels - 301-657-1234; One Metro Center at 7400 Wisconsin Avenue, Bethesda

Hotel Palomar – www.hotelpalomar-dc.com -202-448-1800; 2121 P Street, Northwest, Washington, DC

The Ritz-Carlton - Georgetown www.ritzcarlton.com/en/Properties/Georgetown/Default.htm - 202-912-4100; 3100 South Street, Northwest, Washington, DC

7. Have a special place transformed into art. Watercolor artist Susan St. George of Kensington will create a custom watercolor for you to surprise your spouse. It could be the local spot where you got engaged or your favorite neighborhood spot. She will even paint a faraway place from a picture you provide. Bill Schmick of Bethesda commissioned St. George to paint his family home in Bethesda. He surprised wife Chancey for their 19-year anniversary. “Having been here since 1994, our home was a storehouse of memories,” Dig up an old snapshot from your dating days and frame it; choose from dozens of styles and sizes at Urban Country or Frame Avenue in Bethesda.

Artist Susan St. George – www.stgeorgewatercolors.com - 301-530-0142

8. Give the gift of words. Take the “Writing One Good Poem” workshop at The Writer’s Center in Bethesda—or if you’re not the creative type—buy him or her a book of poetry and read a love poem aloud. “The anthology *Sex and Chocolate: Tasty Morsels for the Mind and Body* may spark some inspiration, too—and it’s edited by Washington, D.C.’s own Richard Peabody and Lucinda Ebersole (Paycock Press),” recommends Sunil Freeman, the Writer’s Center assistant director.

The Writer’s Center – www.writer.org/index.asp -301-654-8664; 4508 Walsh Street, Bethesda

9. Enjoy the calm and beauty of nature. Take a sunset walk along the Capital Crescent Trail. Rent a bicycle-built-for-two at Big Wheel Bikes of Bethesda and pedal away. If hiking is more your speed, head to the C&O Canal or Billy Goat Trail. Pack a picnic lunch from nearby Market on the Boulevard, Cabin John, and picnic at a romantic spot along the Potomac. “Leslie Cohen of North Potomac remembers stealing away with husband Steve to bike the Capital Crescent Trail from Bethesda to Georgetown. “We spent afternoons hiking the Billy Goat trail together and walking through Great Falls with our dog, Benny,” Leslie says. Now they have three kids and even busier weekends, but they are figuring out how and when to go back.

Big Wheel Bikes – www.bigwheelbikes.com - 301-652-0192; 6917 Arlington Road, Bethesda

Market on the Boulevard – 301-229-2526 - 7945 MacArthur Boulevard, Cabin John

10. Soak up ambience and keep the (wine) glass half full. Taste wines at Finewine of Gaithersburg’s Friday “Flight Nights” or enjoy live music in their lounge on Thursday through Saturday nights. Try food and wine pairings at Grapeseed in Bethesda any night of the week. Mira and Eric Silberg of Rockville recently soaked in the atmosphere over dinner at Grapeseed. “We loved the way each wine was perfectly paired with the right food and definitely appreciated a night out while our parents watched our baby,” Mira exclaims.

Finewine
Washingtonian Center, Gaithersburg
301-987-5933
www.finewine.com/homepage.cfm

Grapeseed
Bethesda
301-986-9592
www.grapeseedbistro.com

11. Woo each other at Old Angler’s Inn—in any season. Whether you eat on the romantic patio or cozy up to the fire, you dine surrounded by woods, and you might feel like you are celebrating your engagement all over again. The ambience is also rich in history, dating back to years when couples took the long carriage ride down MacArthur Boulevard from D.C. to Cabin John. Amy and Tim Moore of Potomac went here for dinner last winter and the experience lived up to everything they’d heard about since moving here from San Francisco. “The atmosphere was quaint, cozy and relaxed,” Amy recalls. “And we enjoyed drinking champagne in the lounge before heading to our table.”

Old Angler’s Inn
Potomac
301-299-9097
www.oldanglersinn.com/

12. Take a day off and just hang out. Take the afternoon off and stay in together. Relive those days when you first fell in love and spending time together was more important than running errands or checking BlackBerries. Order in food. Watch old romantic movies or use a personal concierge service to pick up or do whatever you need. Potomac Concierge co-owner Aida Middel offers an “Errand Day” service so couples can hand over their to-do list and consider it done. “We do all those annoying little things while you relax. Money can’t buy happiness, but it can buy time,” Middel says.

Potomac Concierge
240-274-1833

www.potomacconcierge.com

The Runaround

Potomac

301-922-0196

www.runaround.com

13. Feel the rush of a horseback ride. Linda and Floyd Cox of Potomac met horseback riding at Dean Brundage's Equestrian Enterprises in Great Falls, Virginia and have gone almost every Sunday—weather-permitting—for the past 14 years. They go with longtime friends but sometimes ride off by themselves. "It's always an adventure; the views are amazing and very romantic," Linda says. "It's the closest thing to flying without leaving the ground."

Meadowbrook Stables

Chevy Chase

301-589-9026

www.meadowbrookstables.com/

Potomac Horse Center

Gaithersburg

301-208-0200

www.potomachorse.com/index.htm

Woodland Horse Center

Silver Spring

301-421-9156

www.woodlandhorse.com

14. Lie side by side and get a couples massage. "You only live once," says Marlene Rashkin of North Potomac, who, along with husband Nathan, enjoyed an Instructional Couples Massage at the Natural Body Spa and Shoppe in Potomac. Throughout this 90-minute session, they took turns getting a massage and lessons and left with a massage oil gift. No more searching for the right pressure points or tackling ticklish areas! If you're looking to relax instead of learn, try a side by side / two-therapist couples massage in Spalon's VIP Room in Rockville. If the idea of going to a spa isn't for you, contact A Calmness Within; they will send a couples massage therapist to your home.

Natural Body

Potomac

301-610-5004

www.naturalbody.com/locations/md_potomac.php

Spalon Day Spa

Rockville

301-610-7733

www.spalondayspa.com

A Calmness Within
Silver Spring
301-650-9190
www.calmnesswithin.com

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