

50 Cheap Valentine's Day Gifts For Your Sweetheart (Without Looking Cheap)

If you're like most couples, you're watching your pennies this year and looking for ways to romance your sweetheart on Valentine's Day without breaking the bank. This list will help:

1. Create an indoor picnic with available props, i.e., picnic tablecloth, paper goods. Share finger foods and favorite treats along with a glass of wine. Spice up "dessert." Enjoy your picnic on the living room floor or in bed. Play card games, board games, or make up your own.
2. Decorate a unique-looking jar or box with craft items. Write numerous love notes on small pieces of paper and fill the jar with them. Present the jar to your sweetheart.
3. Make a framed group of photos that put your relationship in chronological order of events, by months or years (depending on how long you've been together).
4. There are many local and national Valentine's Day giveaway contests with great prizes. Enter as many as you can and maybe you'll get lucky.
5. Burn a CD with songs that make you think of your sweetheart, and give it to him/her.
6. For couples with children, get them involved in an all-family fun Valentine's Day dinner at home. Mom can prepare a dessert for two and light the candles while dad puts the kids to bed.
7. Leave a note on your mate's pillow expressing how special you think he/she is. Place a couple of mints on the pillow, too (or a single rose)...all to be discovered at bedtime.
8. Create a favorite drink together. Try all kinds of ingredients. Enjoy taste-testing. Be sure to record the ingredients, so you can make the "your" drink again on Valentine's Day year after year.
9. Buy two champagne flutes for use on Valentine's Day only to annually toast your love. Keep them in a visible location as a year-round reminder of how special you are to each other.
10. Create an at-home spa day for your mate. Deliver the gift in a basket filled with inexpensive candles, bubble bath, rose petals, facial mask and scrub. Then give your mate time to enjoy it. When he/she is done, heat up towels in the dryer for drying off.
11. Since Valentine's Day is on a Saturday, celebrate with a day full of low-cost activities you both enjoy doing (depending upon your location and weather). Do something with your significant other that he/she rarely has time to do, but loves.

12. Take a 2-hour, one-time salsa or tango dancing lesson together. Or, identify some other interest you share and find a place to give you one-time extended lesson on Valentine's Day.
13. Gals...Make the entire day full of his favorites: the breakfast of his dreams, the dinner of his dreams, TV that is his favorite, his music, etc. Don't say anything about it, surprise him all day long.
14. Take the person you love to experience something spectacular in nature: a sunset, a sunrise, the calm of the beach, share an evening walk gazing at the moon.
15. Choose specialty foods, such as wine, cheese, fresh bread/dessert from a favorite bakery. Enjoy in front of your warm, toasty fireplace.
16. Give each other long-lingering back rubs or head-to-toe body massages. Invest in luxurious lotion or oils.
17. Watch an old movie at home together, with popcorn and soft drinks and candy – movie-theater style.
18. Share a scrumptious dessert and latté at a local patisserie or bakery.
19. Pick a few household chores your Valentine usually does and surprise them by doing it before they get a chance, i.e., making the bed. It doesn't sound romantic, but the thought will most certainly count.
20. Walk around a favorite part of town, stopping at a nice locale for a glass of wine and appetizers.
21. On Valentine's Day, place three pair of sexy undies on your bed and let your mate pick out which one you should wear. It's your secret!
22. Write a "Top 10 Reasons Why I Love You" list.
23. Since Valentine's Day is on Saturday, if you're a member of a wholesale club (like Sam's or Costco) have fun eating all the free samples! Then fill in any empty holes left in your stomach by going out to lunch. (That way you won't spend a lot of money at a restaurant!)
24. What's a new activity you've both wanted to try that's low cost? Do it. Or, how can you creatively modify it to make it low cost? Do it.
25. Guys...If you want to cook dinner, remember, she doesn't care what you make. There are many easy recipes on food web sites that look like you spent hours in the kitchen. Be imaginative and set the table special. Play romantic music softly while you dine. Leave the clean-up until morning!
26. Guys or Gals...When you make that special dinner...Just like when you go to a fancy event and a "dinner menu" is put on each plate describing each food item, do something similar. For example, on your menu, write "Spaghetti & Meatballs, made with passion to be with YOU." Don't forget to give your "event" or "restaurant" a name at the top of the menu.

27. Make a simple dinner at home, then go out dancing or to listen to live music at a jazz club.
28. Play a sport together that you haven't played in awhile, or that you rarely get a chance to enjoy. Before you start, determine what the "winner" gets (making it something to do with caring, loving, etc.).
29. Leave a "racy" picture on your mate's cell phone. Text a romantic message at a time of day when you know things get hectic.
30. Present your Valentine IOU coupons: I will make dinner; I will do the laundry; I will take care of the kids one day a month for the next year; I will clean the kitchen for a week; I will serve you breakfast in bed.
31. Together, go "shopping" at a sex-toy store without spending any money. It'll give you ideas and get you "in the mood."
32. The tough economy has lured many upscale restaurants to have high-end early-bird specials. Find out what's available in your area.
33. Some volunteer fire departments use holiday fauna to create flower and rose bouquets as a fund-raiser. Prices are reasonable; just get there early.
34. If she loves chocolate...Take her on a chocolates tour. Find your hometown chocolate purveyor and ask for a behind-the-scenes tour. Next, go to a restaurant that serves her favorite chocolate dessert. Return home to snuggle with a cup of hot chocolate.
35. Use a bar of soap to draft a love note on your bathroom mirror. Or, if you shower first, write a love note to your sweetheart in the steam on the mirror.
36. Write "I love you because...." notes and insert them into balloons. Blow up the balloons, and spread the balloons throughout your bedroom for your Valentine to pop and capture each message.
37. Many drug stores with photo departments offer a variety of Valentine's Day specials to make gifts from photographs. Use a good picture of the two of you together.
38. Make homemade chocolate-covered strawberries: 1) Melt a package of chocolate chips in a double boiler and add a small amount of oil; 2) Remove from heat and quickly dip the strawberries into the chocolate; 3) Place on wax paper and refrigerate for several hours until chocolate is firm.
39. Guys...If you want to order flowers for your gal, supermarket florists are generally half the price of the stand-alone or on-line stores, but the trick to for seeing real savings is to order two weeks or more in advance and pay for the flowers up front.....Another trick to save money, get other guys who want to order flowers to join you and place your orders to the same florist all at once. The florist may give you a "bulk" discount. Again, important to plan ahead.
40. Plan a scavenger hunt. Write clues and place them in envelopes, and place the envelopes around town. Make the final clue a doozey of a destination.

41. Get a small radio and take your partner dancing at a romantic hideaway, such as the woods or riverfront or ocean.
42. Use fabric paint to decorate a Valentine's Day pillowcase for your loved one. Check arts-and-crafts web sites for other easy-to-make gifts.
43. What did you do on your very first date? Repeat it.
44. Create a year-long calendar with photos of just the two of you above (top page) each month. Office supply stores will insert the spiral/binding for you.
45. Have a progressive dinner. If you're single, appetizers at his place. Entrée at her place. The middle course, dessert, after-dinner cordials...map it out a few days ahead. If you're married, one course at home, one course at her office, his office, etc. Use your imagination to set locations!
46. Write new "updated" wedding vows, both serious and humorous, and share them with each other over a glass of wine in a candlelit room.
47. In the morning, tuck a love note in his pocket or her pocketbook or other certain-to-be-found spot. Jot down some meaningful words on a piece of paper – "Can't wait to wrap my arms around you tonight!"; "What's for 'dessert'?"; "You make me happy every day!" – and tuck it in a conspicuous location to be easily discovered during the day.
48. Have a 15-minute kissing session and try some new ways and places to kiss. The same old smoocheroo can get boring. Use your imagination...and perhaps a little whipped cream, chocolate syrup, etc.
49. If you don't have a special sweetheart, focus on bringing a smile or laughter to everyone you come in contact with on Valentine's Day.
50. What are your mate's quirks and habits that irk you? Don't nag about any of them the entire day. Then try to extend the no-nagging effort to every day of the year. Remember, you're never going to change the other person.

***This list is brought to you
by Sheryl Kurland,
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