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For love of Valentine's Day

Impress your sweetie by getting a jump on the big day with one of these romantic offerings

BY SARAH PETRESCU, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN



How do you plan on surprising your honey this Valentine's day?

Photograph by: Getty Images,

This Valentine's Day I plan to dig out a vintage '90s Cure T-shirt, paint my nails and lips black and attend an intentionally unromantic Goth-themed birthday party.

I've had many good anti-Valentine's Days. In high school a group of girls went out for pasta and the middle-aged couple sitting nearby surprised us by picking up our bill.

During my undergrad at the University of Victoria, I modelled in an anti-fashion show for which we were re-birthed onto the stage through an anatomically correct curtain.

The best was a few years ago, when a new boyfriend wanted to ignore the day. Slightly repentant, he showed up with a stuffed heart. Little did he know the dollar store toy came with sound effects. I squeezed the "I LOVE YOU!" out of the thing until it died.

But I do imagine Valentine's Days without irony and cynicism -- days where lovers besiege each other with romance and hope.

Scott Hoadley insists these days exist. He has seen romance overflow at the hotel he manages -- Inn at

Laurel Point -- especially on Valentine's Day.

"Many people get engaged here," he said. "Some come up with amazing ideas and elaborate plans. It's really inspirational."

Hoadley and marketing manager Avril Matthews were so inspired they came up with several romantic packages to launch this year, from kinky getaways to a \$9,999 engagement.

"The Just Say I Do package is all the best ideas put together," said Hoadley.

The package includes a \$7,500 custom diamond ring from J.W. Francis Jewellers, a private dinner with a sommelier and chef introduction, a night in the penthouse suite with champagne and monogrammed bathrobes, among other nuances.

"Romance is a major draw for us. We do a lot of weddings," he said, showing me the hotel's ocean view ballroom and suites. "Even with the difficult economy we are not seeing a drop in engagements or weddings at all."

Those in need of getaway might want to try the hotel's Naughty or Nice packages. The former includes a sex toy love kit and the latter includes a bath kit, chocolates and rose-petal turn down.

The subtle, stay-at-home types might want to try another set of valentine-themed packages from Lush handmade cosmetics.

"Without the love that goes into our products, we would not be Lush -- we would be just another beauty company," marketer Jennifer O'Holla tells me from her New York office. "This resonates with our customers because we put in romantic ingredients, flirty names and aphrodisiac oils."

She said they have designed three intimate packages for various types of couples, with their most-popular, flirtatious items.

Die-hard bath fans will like the True Love box (\$42.95), with massage bars and bath bombs. The Happy Valentine's gift (\$12.95) is a smaller version.

The Hello Sailor package (\$12.95) encourages couples to take a shower together with the cheeky Rub Rub Rub sea salt shower scrub, peppermint-infused Too Drunk emotibomb and a temporary tattoo.

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