

## Create A Romantic Evening At Home

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There are a number of factors you need to consider when planning your romantic evening:

### 1. Your Physical Surroundings

It's a good idea to make sure your house or apartment is clean and tidy. It may not be anyone's primary focus but it will make an impression on your guest, even if it's subliminal.

Spend a few hours doing the cleaning yourself, hire someone to do it for you, or, at the very least, shove all that clutter into your closets or under the bed. Wipe down surfaces to get rid of dust and stains.

Apart from the living and dining areas, there are two other rooms that need your attention:

#### a. The bathroom

Wipe down the sink/washbasin, tub and shower stall. Put a fresh cake of soap on the sink and hang fresh towels. At the very least your guest will use the bathroom to wash his or her hands so make sure it's a pleasant experience.

#### b. The bedroom

Get rid of any extraneous clutter like clothes strewn around the room or on the floor. Change the sheets, make the bed and wipe down any surfaces. If your guest ends up spending the night, you don't want him or her racing off for a tetanus shot in the morning.

To create a romantic atmosphere in your bedroom, have some scented candles on hand and an easy-to-reach sound system. You might also consider buying a quilt cover in a rich, romantic color and a set of sheets to match.

### 2. Your Choice of Menu

While food can be an excellent means of seduction, it's a mistake to choose too complicated a menu unless you're an experienced cook and you don't get easily flustered.

Simple dishes like spaghetti or ratatouille make a tasty and satisfying meal without spiking your anxiety levels. The point is to enjoy the evening along with your guest, not treat the event like it's a university-entrance exam.

#### How To Avoid Psycho-Chef Syndrome

One trick is to prepare as much of the meal as possible beforehand so you're not rushing around like a pinball once your guest arrives.

Have all the ingredients chopped, diced and ready for cooking. Do this the night before or earlier that day, whatever works best for you.

Salad ingredients can be prepared earlier and stored in separate containers, then added to the salad bowl and dressed before serving.

You can even cheat by purchasing your meal from a favorite restaurant and having it delivered (or picking it up) before your guest arrives.

Definitely buy dessert from your favorite bakery or supermarket, unless you're a wiz at whipping up a Pavlova or meringue. Another option is to prepare dessert the night before and reheat it if necessary when you're ready to serve it.

### 3. Your Cooking Area

Make sure your kitchen is clean before you begin cooking. Yes, you'll no doubt make a mess once you start but you don't want yesterday's dishes in the way. Your guest may offer to help so the kitchen needs to meet minimum health standards.

It's up to you whether you accept this help or not, but we recommend that you do, even if it's only a token effort like tossing the salad. Sharing cooking tasks can be a wonderfully romantic interaction as it creates a special kind of intimacy. Have you ever noticed how much more easily conversation flows when two people are doing a task, as opposed to sitting face to face?

### 4. Setting the Table

Set the table beforehand. Use a good tablecloth, your best silverware and a nice set of plates. Use your best glasses and an attractive salt and pepper set, milk jug and sugar bowl. Show your guest that you went to some trouble to make the meal a special occasion. This is not the time for melamine dishes or chipped or mismatched crockery. You're aiming for a touch of class.

Use candlesticks on the table for a romantic ambience, or place candles on other surfaces around the room.

Background music is a must but make sure it's romantic and subtle. Limit blaring rock and roll or rap to the period when you're preparing dinner, but please, no high-octane music while you're eating.

Set the sound at a low volume so it doesn't interfere with your conversation. And remember, if you don't play music during the meal you run the risk of filling any silences with the sound of people masticating.

### 5. Cleaning Up Later

Don't let your guest anywhere near the kitchen after the meal is over. Hopefully you'll have better things to do with your time together.

But all is not lost if they do insist on helping with the chores. Many a couple has fallen in love while doing the dishes, for two main reasons:

1. As mentioned earlier, there's the ease of conversation that takes place when you're doing a task rather than concentrating on talking.
2. Doing dishes together is like playing house. It can actually feel very romantic, especially when one or both people realize, "This is what I want with this person." You won't get the same effect if you use a dishwasher, so set aside at least a couple of pots, which will allow suggesting, "I'll wash and you dry."

With a little forethought, anyone can create a romantic evening at home. The old cliché, "the way to a person's heart is through their stomach", has more than a little truth to it. Test it yourself with someone you care about. The least you'll get is a great home-cooked meal.

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Author: kavita

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