

## FEEL THE 'LURVE'

The adverts and window displays have already started to appear - yes, it'll be Valentine's Day soon folks, and I've been checking out some gift options. At least this year we have the freedom to enjoy the option of dining out, or even going for a romantic getaway weekend before or after. So do, please, consider supporting our hospitality industry; after all, it's been through a very rough time in the last couple of years.

Budget-wise for gifts, the sky appears to be the limit, but let's be sensible about this; you can buy a card (or make one) and give a lovely box of chocolates (heart shaped ones too) for a very reasonable price. Looking at chocolate hearts, there are lots of different hearts to choose from: **Divine**, the only Fairtrade chocolate company co-owned by its farmers, produces a very reasonably priced pack of solid chocolate, foil wrapped, hearts. Choose between vegan-friendly, Rich Dark Chocolate, Milk Chocolate, or White Chocolate with pieces of real dried strawberry. £3 an 80g pack from Waitrose, Ocado, Traidcraft or [Divine Online](#). Another favourite of mine is **Montezuma's** and their Valentine truffle hearts are delicious. With prices from £7 - you can see the full range online [here](#). But if, like me, you also enjoy a top quality marzipan heart, look no further than these **Niederegger** ones from John Lewis (£8 for a 125g box).



I know champagne is usually the drink of Valentine's Day, there are other options, like this delicious South African sparkler from Stellenbosch. **Van Hunks Rosé MCC** is fresh, unexpectedly dry, with a rich and long flavourful finish. It's Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinotage – a grape variety created in South Africa in the 1900's. Produced using the traditional method identical to Méthode Champenoise, the rosé is bottle fermented in small batches and matured in contact with the lees for approximately 30 months. Perfect for sending your loved one - in a beautiful wooden gift box too from [Not On The High Street](#) £30 each or £60 for two bottles.



If you really love someone, then bloody well tell them! And what better way than with a stonkingly great Bloody Mary from **Bloody Drinks**! As a long-term aficionado of this particular cocktail, I've tried a few over the years, and can vouch for these being bloody good! **The Bloody Box** (£25) is the ideal Valentine gift for the Bloody Mary lover in your life. It contains everything needed for the perfect Bloody Mary, complete with garnishes and snacks. You can even personalise your Bloody cans to make your gift that extra bit special - and delivery is free - see this gift pack and other options from the company at its website [here](#)

If a different cocktail is more to your taste, Pritesh Mody, founder of **World of Zing** and Channel 4 Sunday Brunch cocktail expert, has created some accomplished cocktails, including a cocktail in a card! Ranging from Salted Caramel Espresso Martini to perennial favourites such as Rhubarb Cosmopolitan and Bordeaux Cask Negroni, this is a romantic surprise through the postbox with a cute boozy card. (RRP £10 per card from [worldofzing.com](http://worldofzing.com)) The website has a whole range of cocktails and sizes for most spirit bases, including a travel pack (£15) and ready-to-pour bottles in a host of different classic cocktails from around £14 for 250ml. Giving 3-4 serves, it's great value when you compare the price of a cocktail in a bar or restaurant .



Beer isn't perhaps usually considered that romantic, but online drinks specialist **Flavourly** has partnered with **Arcade Beerworks and the Secret Garden Distillery**, UK's largest grower of the Apothecary Rose, to create a 'romantic', limited edition, craft beer. The **Rose Pale Ale** is brewed using distilled rose water giving the beer a delicate floral 'bouquet'. This is a modern, hazy pale ale with bold flavours of citrus, passion fruit and grapefruit, balanced with a subtly sweet malt body and interwoven with delicate rose notes. It's infused with distilled rose water derived from the Apothecary Rose, the only medicinal rose in the world, (as used in Apothecary Rose Gin). Available exclusively from [Flavourly](http://Flavourly). Rose Pale Ale (4% abv) costs £19.95 for 6 - 330ml cans, £29.95 for 12 or £44.95 for 24 including two free Flavourly glasses and snack. Delivery to your loved one is free - you just need to decide if you want to make it anonymous or declare your feelings!

Talking of roses, I recently tasted a delicious pairing of strawberry cream with Tequila. It really is silky smooth, unusual and fun. Whether on the rocks, in a creamy cocktail, or just poured over ice cream, it makes a lovely Valentine's (or Mother's Day) gift. **Tequila Rose** is very reasonably priced too - at around £12 a 70cl bottle - from Tesco, Sainsbury's or Amazon. My mind is already spinning with serving ideas for summer and the strawberry season!



If you're planning a stay-at-home romantic get together, you could perhaps surprise your loved one with a delivery from [44 Foods](http://44 Foods). There's a fabulous range of top quality foods in easy bundles, (you can make up your own, of course). Breakfast bundles start from £24 and there are also Staycation bundles, Date Steak Night, and a Valentine's Fish Meal for two. **44 Foods** delivers fresh, seasonal, tasty food direct from the farm to your door. Food that's packaged sustainably and with minimum waste, and at a price that's fair to farmers and customers. Everything is top notch quality from independent producers - and the eggs were the freshest and most delicious I have had for years.

Of course you can head to the supermarket, for one of those special Valentine meal deals - they will all be offering them. According to The Good Housekeeping Institute's taste test, Aldi comes out on top this year! The budget retailer beat the likes of M&S (in second place), Co-op (third place) and Tesco.