

Food for thought III: Dining for Valentine's Day on every budget

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Although the town of Brevard and Western North Carolina are considered to be isolated, there is an array of fine dining and good restaurants in Brevard, Hendersonville, and Asheville. I have chosen three upstanding great restaurants from three different budgets to help coax couples and first daters to celebrate Valentine's Day by eating well.

Starting close to home, Hob Nob restaurant on West Main Street offers a warm and inviting atmosphere, efficient and friendly service, an extensive and impressive wine list and some of the best food in Brevard. The dinner menu offers salads like the Warm Goat Cheese in Puff Pastry served over Baby Greens, Fresh Tomatoes, Toast Points and a Balsamic Vinaigrette, appetizers like the local favorite Seared Jumbo Scallops with a spicy apricot glaze, entrees that vary from Dill Crusted Mountain Trout, Sushi-grade Sesame Crusted Seared Tuna, Jambalaya, Steak au Poivre, and New Zealand Rack of Lamb, as well as different nightly specials. All the desserts are made in house and the winner is the Warm Center Chocolate Cake with Raspberry sauce and Vanilla ice-cream.

Being a poor college student it is not easy to muster up the cash to treat yourself and a date to fine dining. However, if you are financially able and want to impress your taste buds or your date Savoy in Asheville hits the top five of my favorite restaurants in the world list. This intimate restaurant's

atmosphere resonates with elegance. The food is superbly and finely flavored and prepared.

The Savoy Restaurant website boasts that "our chefs craft to reflect the flavors of France, Italy, Spain and Asia, enhanced by only the freshest locally-grown organic produce,

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V e a l S w e e t b r e a d s
(sweatbread are the jugular vein of a baby cow. The first time I ate Sweetbreads the chef kept trying to convince me that they were testicles, so when I found out what they actually were I didn't feel ashamed about how tasty I found them.) The entrees range from Tasmanian Salmon Brulee to Lobster Pot Pie to

Roasted Quail to Argentinean Gaucho Steak. My favorite thing about Savoy's menu is the Chef's Tasting Menu. You can choose between a three course meals or a five course meal of the chef's choice for a fixed price that can also be paired with wine. The wine list is a bit pricy but if you're dining at

Savoy, it's best just to go all out. Hands down, if you like the fine dining experience you will have a dinner at Savoy that you will be talking about for years.

For those who have an emptier wallet but still want to have a great meal this Valentine's Day, try Doc Chey's i n

Asheville. The Asian Noodle House is inexpensive, delicious, optional vegetarian, and has hot sake. For an appetizer I would choose the Spicy Chinese Wrap. My main course would be either the Tomato Ginger, Spicy Thai Basil noodle bowls, or the Thai Broccoli rice plate. All of these dishes can be served with just vegetables, tofu, chicken, salmon, or steak. Every time I go there, I choose a different meal and have yet to be

disappointed. If you're looking for a more casual celebration for Valentine's Day, Doc Chey's is perfect.

No matter what kind of budget you have this Valentine's Day, there's a restaurant out there. The Hob Nob, Savoy, and Doc Chey's are only three great restaurants in this area, make sure to explore with your eating habits and try new places to eat, you could end up pleasantly surprised. To find more information about these restaurants go to their websites. Doc Chey's (\$) www.doccheys.com There are no reservations taken so be prepared to wait a small amount of time for a table.

Hob Nob Restaurant (\$\$) www.hobnobrestaurant.com 828-966-4662

Savoy (\$\$\$) www.savoyasheville.com 828-253-1077

Make sure to call both Hob Nob and Savoy to make reservations at least 3-4 days in advance for Valentine's Day, considering it will be a very busy night for both restaurants

My idea of a great time (Valentine's Day or not) is going out to eat. Unfortunately, spending almost my entire life working in the restaurant industry, I've always had to and will be waiting tables. For the rest of you, Valentine's Day is a great excuse to eat out and take a break from cafeteria food or trying to figure out which roommate's food is in the cupboard. Go out and celebrate this day of love with the person or people you love and remember the key to the heart is through a glass of wine and a full stomach.

