

THE PERFECT RENDEZVOUS

With its infinite variety – 66 Michelin star restaurants, 230 theatres, hundreds of galleries and museums and thousands of licensed establishments – choosing where to go out in London can be pretty daunting. So, we ask Jason Phillips, General Manager of Franco's and Wilton's restaurants in St James's, where he would choose to go for an ideal date.

What are your favourite things about London?

The diversity of attractions from stately homes, city parks, historical monuments, art galleries, theatres and not forgetting plentiful restaurants and bars.

Your favourite aspects of London's culture?

That London is a melting pot of cultures from around the world. Londoners celebrate diversity so that you can be exactly who you want to be where ever and whenever.

What's the best part of its nightlife?

London is probably now the best city in the world in which you can go to restaurants that offer finest food of any country you would like to try. Not only does London offer the diversity in flavours but also price point and location.



Is London romantic enough for an ideal date?

Definitely! There are countless things to do, be it visiting an art gallery, walking along the serpentine, taking a trip on the London Eye or going on a famous London tour bus or guided tour of London. It's super expensive.

If you're sent flowers before a date?

Yes, I met a lady at a party and was instantly smitten. I sent the flowers but heard no reply and was very disappointed to say the least. I later learned that she had gone on holiday and came back to bunch of dried flowers wilting in the vase!

Your favourite flower of choice?

I love lilies.



What would be the main event – art, theatre, dance, music?

On the first date it would be focused on getting to know each other rather than the entertainment. That comes later perhaps date two or three when I've found out more about the guest.

Best of these you have seen recently.

Theatre; I really liked Michael Jackson!

What would you have in mind if the date was tonight?

A drink on the South Bank followed by dinner then a walk along the river or over Waterloo bridge afterwards, it's a great location for seeing the sights of London at dusk.

Where would you go for an early tittle?

Oxo Tower has a great view of London as does Windows of the World Bar at the top of the Hilton on Park Lane.



Anywhere you haven't been yet that you'd like to try?

I've not been to the Ned which I've heard is popular and fun.

What's your favourite aperitif?

Champagne, dirty martini or a Classic Champagne Cocktail

Do you have any favourites amongst all the new boutique spirits that are jostling for shelf-space in London's trendiest bars?

When I drink a Gin and Tonic I like Hendricks with a slice of cucumber as this brings out all the botanicals of the gin and is particularly refreshing.



Eat before or after the main event? Or is the eating the main event?

Main event? What are we talking here! Not on the first night please.... On a serious note that depends on the couple and what they're in the mood for.

Would you choose an old favourite, new favourite or try somewhere new?

I like to try new places as it's too easy to go back to old favourites.

Name an old favourite

It was La Brasserie in South Kensington alas now closed.

Name a new favourite

Arts Club

Favourite wine with dinner:

Champagne, burgundy or a good chardonnay.

Tobacco. Pleasure, poison or both?

Definitely poison.

Favourite after dinner club.

Downstairs at The Arts Club or Annabelle

What do you think about the latest developments in the War on Tobacco (blank packaging covered in disease porn)

Good thing - smoking is evil.

Favourite cigar.

Smoking is evil!

Do you like to discuss Realpolitik over dinner or prefer to keep it light?

Again, that depends on the person and who is comfortable then conversation flows, if serious works then go with the flow but not too much, variety is the name of the game.

Favourite conversation topics over dinner

Favourite holidays, when younger and now, desired holiday destinations, films, books, theatre, aspirations, desires...

What are your main sources of information on the net?

Sadly the usual, LinkedIn, Facebook, Times on line, BBC, Business Insider, Food Insider

Have the recent political shakeups and increasing dis/misinformation made you want to pay more or less attention to current affairs?

From time to time I feel that I should give up watching the news as it tends to be exceptionally depressing. Only to go back to it as I feel that I should know what's happening in the world positive and negative.

Franco's is the perfect location for a first date, start with a classic venetian spritzer on one of their outside tables then move inside to sample a wide range of Italian favourites such as 'Vitello Tonnato' or Burrata with Gazpacho or Beef 'alla Tagliata'. Select a wine from a rich diversity of wines from the north to South of Italy, close your eyes and you could be in Rome!

Wilton's. Nothing will impress your date more than being taken to Wilton's. Start with fresh oysters opened in front of you at the Oyster bar, while sipping champagne or a fine Chablis. Then move through to the restaurant and enjoy one of the finest examples of British cooking London has to offer with dishes like Grilled Dover Sole, Halibut and Turbot grilled or poached on the bone and native Lobster Newberg or Thermidor. The predominantly French wine list proudly boasts many unique and rare wines and focuses on Burgundy and Bordeaux.