



DIG

SEX & THE SINGLE DINER CLOSING TIME



PHOTO: KELLY PULZIO

Since restaurants are the obvious stage for most dates, from first dates to anniversaries, let's take a look at how to make your next meal dial in the Rico Suave quotient as much as possible. I had a fun time chatting with noted San Francisco restaurant architect and designer Cass Calder Smith, founder of CCS Architecture and author of the new book *EAT LIVE WORK* — a retrospective of his firm's many projects — who shared some pro tips about maximizing the romantic potential of your dates in restaurants. You can thank us later.

Dine at the Bar

Restaurants are paying even more attention to their bar environments, making them a comfortable place to dine that's almost on par with the main room. They're an ideal spot for a date, since you don't have a table between you, so you can touch your date flirtatiously and share bites of food. It's also easier for the cocktails to flow when you're at the bar, and we all know what that means. Buzz buzz. But Smith cautions to watch your booze intake — there's happily buzzed, and then there's sloppy, which can sneak up quickly. He also notes that, when you dine at the bar, you can have the pace of your meal move a lot more quickly — you can just leave when it's about that time, which may be after a couple of appetizers. Bow chicka bow bow.

The Art of the Banquette

If you aren't going to dine at the bar, the next best thing for optimal closeness is to dine side by side. And if there's a banquette, that's easy to arrange. It's a lot like how you'll see folks sit side

by side in Parisian bistros — it's cozier, and you both end up with a nice view of the room. For the ultimate suave move, if the table is rectangular, have your server rotate it a quarter turn so you get a little more table width to dine on. Smith says this is definitely something your date will notice ("you can consider it a form of foreplay — it shows creative thinking"). Which is always kind of hot.

Corner Pocket

When booking, ask the reservationist if there are any corner tables where you can dine. It makes your meal feel much more intimate, because you manage to remove an entire side of people next to you, plus you can sit kind of close to each other, and it's quieter. Smith adds this tip: Ask for a table as far away from the front door as possible.

Light It Up

Think about where you're going ahead of time. Is the room bright or nicely dim? For an extra-romantic feeling, try to choose places that have candles on the table — Smith says balanced lighting from above and below is the most flattering. Another thing to note is whether a place has incandescent lighting, which is warmer. Stay away from the fluorescent scene. Everyone wins.

Order Like a Smart Person

First dates are not the time to go out for Korean barbecue (which is delicious, but kimchee breath and burps, egad, do not encourage deep, passionate kissing), nor is it ideal to dive into some huge tasting menu that takes three hours and puts you in a food coma. Also: It's always intimate to share food and, since many more restaurants offer communal dishes these days, think about places with a family-style format. One last move for you: Smith says you can almost always get dessert to go. How saucy is that?

Have fun out there. ABC. Always. Be. Closing

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