

Saying 'I Love You' may be free, but Sunday it may cost you



ANNE REED, AREED@NEWS-PRESS.COM 5:02 p.m. EST February 10, 2016

This Valentine's Day, consumers will show their love with candy, flowers, dinners and cash.



Buy Photo

(Photo: Sarah Coward/news-press.com)

Saying "I Love You" may be free, but this Sunday, showing your love is going to cost you.

According to the [National Retail Federation](#), consumers will spend an average of \$146.84 on the first major consumer holiday of the year, up from \$142.31 last year. The NRF conducts the [Valentine's Day Consumer Spending Survey](#) each January and this year, 7,293 consumers participated.

Of those surveyed, 91 percent plan to buy something for their spouse or significant other, spending close to \$90; the total spent on significant others and spouses is expected to reach \$12 billion.

That big dollar amount includes your typical line-up of Valentine's Day purchases: flowers, cards, candy, jewelry and dining out. But this year, Valentine's Day falls on a Sunday, which may affect both national and local dollars spent on the holiday.

Chocolate

A total of \$1.7 billion is expected to be spent on candy, with 50 percent of those who participated in the NRF survey saying they plan to purchase candy as a gift.

Last year, Norman Love Confections sold more than 25,000 gift boxes of chocolates. That breaks down to 475,000 individual pieces of artisan chocolate, including 200,000 Valentine's Day heart-shaped chocolates. And to make those chocolates, the company used 15,000 pounds of chocolate.

"Valentine's Day has always been our busiest time of year," explained Norman Love, founder of Norman Love Confections. "[Traditionally](#), the day before Valentine's Day is the busiest single day of the year."

With the day of romance falling on a Sunday, Love anticipates numbers at his chocolate salons will be up, expecting Saturday evening and Sunday morning to bring large sales numbers. His [Fort Myers](#) and Naples chocolate salons will have special Sunday hours, and the [Estero](#) location will operate on its normal Sunday schedule.

"It's the weekend and less people are working, so that gives a little more time for gift buying," Love said. "Men traditionally wait until the day before or the day of Valentine's Day to make their gift purchases, so we'll see customers lining up early."



Buy Photo

Ruth Messmer Florist co-owner Jessica Gnagey designs petite floral arrangements for the upcoming Valentine's Day holiday Tuesday in Fort Myers. (Photo: Sarah Coward/news-press.com)

Flowers

At Ruth Messmer Florist, sales numbers have been up over the last few years, not just on Valentine's Day.

"We've seen a trend where our customers are spending more per arrangement," explained Jessica Gnagey, who owns the two locations with her mother, Heather Messmer. "Over the last few years we saw the average amount spent on an arrangement go from \$50 to \$75."

But, because of the holiday falling on a Sunday, Gnagey has ordered 20 percent less in supplies and expects to do 20 percent less in sales.

"Last time it fell on a Sunday it wasn't a huge walk-in holiday," Gnagey said. "It's definitely a normal holiday."

One advantage of the Sunday holiday is that customers have ordered and scheduled delivery in advance. "Most of our Valentine deliveries are going out Friday," Gnagey said. "It's spread out over Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Instead of being one big day of sales, we hope to have three."

Restaurants

The [Veranda](#) is booked solid for Sunday. The downtown Fort Myers historic gem is a popular Valentine's Day destination, with reservations filling up two weeks in advance.

"It doesn't matter what day of the week Valentine's Day falls on, the Veranda is always booked with reservations," explained Beth Watson, director of marketing for the Veranda.

Special Sunday hours ensure that diners can experience the romance and charm of the restaurant all through the weekend and a special Valentine's Day menu will be served.

It isn't just the holiday that drives the restaurant's numbers up in February. "Season plays into the sales numbers for February more than Valentine's Day," Watson noted.

"Wine sales are usually up about 40 percent on Valentine's Day compared with other Friday or Saturday nights," Watson said.

But perhaps the most interesting number relates to the most famous booth in the restaurant, tucked under the stairs in a mirrored alcove, where many couples over the years have become engaged.

"On Valentine's Day, we have the highest number of marriage proposals than any other day."

Valentine's Day Spending

With the average amount spent on a spouse or significant other expected to be \$90, according to the NRF, what about those on a budget, or those with no budget? We've got a few ideas.

Budget Friendly

Sweet:

Skip the chocolates and go with the color of red. Try Love Boat's red velvet ice cream, featuring a red velvet cake-based ice cream with chocolate cake inside and cream cheese swirls inside. Starts at \$4.50.

Love Boat Ice Cream, 16229 San Carlos Blvd., Fort Myers, 466-7707; or 1700 Periwinkle Way, Unit 9, [Sanibel](#), 312-4356.

Scented and Savory:

Take your Valentine to the Edison Garden Festival on Valentine's Day and choose a tropical plant or exotic orchid together from one of the many vendors on property. There will also be food trucks and craft beer on property if you'd like to follow up your stroll with a romantic picnic by the banyans. Admission is free; cost of plants, food truck offerings and craft beer depends on the vendor. Edison & Ford Winter Estates, 2350 McGregor Blvd., Fort Myers; 334-7419; <http://www.edisonfordwinterestates.org/>

Budget Buster

Sweet:

Go over-the-top for your sweetie with the 50 piece gift box from Norman Love Confections, which includes selections from the signature line and 2016 Valentine's Day collection. \$95; Norman Love Confections, 11380 Lindbergh Blvd., Fort Myers, 561-7215; 3747 Tamiami Trail N., Naples, 687-7215; or Miromar Outlets, 10801 Corkscrew Road, Suite S-516, Estero, 672-8787.

Scented:

Send three dozen long-stemmed red roses to your sweetie from Ruth Messmer Florist. \$204.99; 8695 College Parkway, Suite 133, Fort Myers, 936-5559; 3366 Cleveland Ave., Fort Myers, 936-2131.

Savory:

Make reservations for a seven-course aphrodisiac-inspired dinner at the Naples Grande Beach Resort. Comes with your own private cabana and a bottle of Dom Perignon Champagne. Starts at \$1,000 per couple; Naples Grande Beach Resort, 475 Seagate Drive, Naples; call 594-6021.

Read or Share this story: <http://newspr.es/1Xh1kuB>