

12 top romantic restaurants in SF

Becky Duffett

From a seafood icon with sweeping Bay Bridge views to a laidback Nepalese spot, these **most romantic restaurants in SF** are the perfect setting for everything from first dates to anniversaries and proposals.

An old-school steakhouse in [Van Ness](#) with rolling carts and extra-large martinis wows couples celebrating just about anything. A seafood icon in [Embarcadero](#) is a proposal favorite for sweeping Bay Bridge views. And a laidback Nepalese place in [Mission](#) makes an ideal first date spot, thanks to colorful cocktails and a moody blue dining room.

This guide pairs [San Francisco](#) restaurants with romantic occasions from first dates all the way to milestone anniversaries.

Book a reservation right now for any of these romantic restaurants in SF on [OpenTable](#).

Read on for a guide to San Francisco's 12 best date-night restaurants

For a first date

For a laid-back California-inspired spot with a lush patio – head to [Cultivar](#) (Marina/Cow Hollow/Presidio)





Couples get cozy with local wines and mushroom risotto at Cultivar. Credit: Cultivar

[Cultivar](#)'s unassuming modern facade doesn't exactly scream romance. But in-the-know locals head to the **Californian spot** for a table on the **back patio**—a surprisingly lush and private escape. Here, the oversized fireplace is the low-key star, creating a charming mood to go with Cultivar's **small-batch wines and seasonal dishes**. Standouts include New York steak with chimichurri, mushroom risotto, decadent made-for-sharing cheese and charcuterie boards.

For a Nepalese feast at a cozy local favorite – visit [Dancing Yak \(Mission\)](#)



Yellow velvet chairs and a blue dining room fuel the moody first-date vibes at Dancing Yak. Credit: Dancing Yak

For a first date that's off the beaten track, head to [Dancing Yak](#), a **restaurant inspired by the mountains of Nepal**. Get comfortable in the yellow velvet chairs and sip on colorful cocktails like the bourbon-forward Don't Talk Yak or the mezcal-fueled Spicy Yeti while snacking on juicy momos (dumplings) in spicy tomato sauce. You can graduate to **curries and biryanis** if things are going exceptionally well.

For a second date

For elegant Venetian-inspired small plates at one of the most romantic restaurants in SF – head to [Sorella](#) (Russian Hill)





A selection of cicchetti, or Venetian-inspired small plates, at date-night spot Sorella. Credit: Sorella

The little sister spinoff of MICHELIN-Starred [Acquerello](#), [Sorella](#)'s cicchetti—**Venetian-inspired cocktails and snacks**—make it an ideal spot for a second date. Slide into the bar for a casual drink, and have fun sampling the **amaro paired with small plates** like arancini and anchovy toast with cultured butter. Plus, it's a quintessential Streamline Moderne building, if you want to test your date's taste in SF architecture.

For cozy French bistro vibes at one of the most romantic restaurants in SF- reserve a spot at [L'Ardoise](#) (The Castro)





A seafood stew brimming with prawns and mussels at L'Ardoise. Credit: L'Ardoise

This neighborhood gem is the **quintessential French bistro**. “L'Ardoise” means “chalkboard,” evoking scribbled menus in Parisian restaurants. The petite dining room is filled with **cozy corners for snuggling**, and it's the rare SF restaurant where you can actually hear your date. But you'll find yourself leaning in anyway, drawn to steak frites or duck confit in the glow of candlelight.

For an anniversary or milestone

For fine Cantonese dining in a historic space – book a table at [Empress by Boon](#) (Chinatown)



Leather and latticework accents give an elegant edge to the dining room at Empress by Boon. Credit: Jean Bai

With its regal blue interiors, [Empress by Boon](#) evokes the grandeur of its home in a historic Chinatown banquet hall. The elegant date spot is worthy of [extra-special romantic occasions](#), fueled by a **knockout Cantonese tasting menu from award-winning chef Ho Chee Boon**, featuring celebration-worthy dishes like baked Alaskan black cod in sa cha sauce and lobster in sweet chile glaze.

For a romantic dinner at a classic SF steakhouse – visit [House of Prime Rib](#) (Civic Center/Hayes Valley/Van Ness)



Handsome red leather booths line the dining room at the legendary steakhouse. Credit: House of Prime Rib

[House of Prime Rib](#) is the **king of steakhouses** in San Francisco. Whether you're celebrating one month or 20 years, it's the spot to shake things up with an **extra-large martini**. Locals love the

luxurious prime-rib dinner as much as the outrageously fun time: Diners get rowdy when the carts roll through the dining room, with chefs spinning salads and slicing cuts to order. Book early to score a coveted red leather booth for an unforgettable night together.

For an intimate and cozy night out

For cozy vibes and wood-fired Mediterranean fare – head to [Kokkari Estiatorio](#) (Financial District)

[Kokkari](#) may be a power-lunch hub by day, but at night, it becomes one of SF's [coziest date spots](#). The taverna is decked with wooden beams and ceramic accents for days, plus a natural stone hearth that's responsible for **Mediterranean-inspired hits** like grilled octopus and smoky lamb chops with lemon-oregano vinaigrette. The staff here is all about philoxenia, or the concept of turning a stranger into a friend, making Kokkari equally great for both early-in-the-game dates and special occasions.

For a knockout omakase experience at one of the most romantic restaurants in SF – visit [Sushi Hon](#) (Mission District)



The omakase experience at Sushi Hon comes in a couple of rounds of nigiri. Credit: Sushi Hon

[Sushi Hon](#) is for couples who worship at the altar of omakase and where you go for an impressive, uncluttered **tasting menu**. The zuke chu-toro (soy-cured fatty tuna) might be the best way to a sushi

lover's heart. Add a sleek, charcoal-colored backdrop and lighting that focuses on the fish, and you've got the kind of **world-class Japanese spot** you'll want to keep coming back to.

For a group date

For a crowd-pleasing Latin-meets-Caribbean destination – pull up at [iChao Pescao!](#)
(Civic Center/Hayes Valley/Van Ness)



Pink, yellow, and teal colors splash across the interiors at iChao Pescao! Credit: iChao Pescao!

iChao Pescao! blasted open with a riot of color in 2021, when owner Rene Denis decided to combine the best of his **Cuban and Colombian heritage**, inviting empanadas and arepas to the party. It's a fun spot to come with a **date, double date, or whole crew**, for a round of cocktails just as bright as the decor. Plus, it's conveniently located close to the Theatre District, if you need to catch a bite before a show.

For an evening of eatertainment

For live jazz at one of the most romantic restaurants in SF – reserve a spot at [BIX](#) (Financial District/Embarcadero)



BIX boasts two levels of seating with a view of the jazz piano and martini bar. Credit: Kristen Loken

A trip to BIX shuttles you to a bygone San Francisco era. The **stylish American supper club** was founded in 1988 and owes its popularity to a **nightly jazz band performance**. Expect impeccable service from bartenders dressed in signature white jackets—but the staff's buttoned-up outfits don't mean they're snooty. Instead, they make diners feel super welcome in a restaurant owner Doug "Bix" Biederbecke describes as "a party every night."

For an adventurous and transportive date

For a Swiss-inspired après-ski experience – head to [The Matterhorn Restaurant and Bakery](#) (Marina/Cow Hollow/Presidio)



Antler chandeliers, festive flags, and wood panels make the Matterhorn feel like a cozy ski lodge.

Credit: The Matterhorn Restaurant and Bakery

Who can resist the charms of fondue? Take a ride to the Swiss Alps at the **ski-lodge-inspired** [Matterhorn](#), which is kitted out like a chalet with pine-wood paneling, electric trains, and even a full-on gondola that exclusively seats one lucky couple. The team bakes the **sourdough in-house and melts the best gruyere**, so dunk away and see where the night takes you.

For a proposal-worthy place

For epic Bay Bridge views at one of the most romantic restaurants in SF – book a table at [Waterbar](#) (Financial District/Embarcadero)





Feast on luxe seafood with sweeping views at local favorite Waterbar. Credit: Waterbar

Every diner seems to be celebrating something at this splashy, Pat Kuleto–designed place, all nautical dark wood finishes and floor-to-ceiling aquariums. With its **flawless seafood menu** and prime seats for watching boats float under the Bay Bridge, [Waterbar](#) is a sought-after proposal spot. Don't miss the chandelier with glowing orbs—a subtle nod to the restaurant's **extensive caviar program**.

From a legendary steakhouse to cozy omakase, cocktails and cicchetti to a party of empanadas, you can find the right restaurant for any kind of date in San Francisco on OpenTable. Make sure to lock down a table at the most romantic restaurants in SF by snagging a reservation on OpenTable now.

Book a table today at one of the most romantic restaurants in SF on [OpenTable](#).

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[Becky Duffett](#) is a food writer living and eating in San Francisco. She was the deputy editor for

Eater SF and has written for Bon Appétit, Food & Wine, the New York Times, and the San Francisco Chronicle. Follow her on Instagram at [@beckyduffett](#).

[Valerie Demicheva](#) is a Bay Area-based journalist and photographer whose work has appeared on the covers of the San Francisco Chronicle, Women's Wear Daily, and Silicon Valley Magazine. Follow her on X at [@vdemicheva](#).