

## INTRO

A friend recently updated his Facebook status to note that he has lived here for so long that he was genuinely surprised this year when it got cold in January. That and a few inches of snow — a particularly nice variety that was good for sledding — and we all now are official veterans of winter. Great. Now let's get on with balmier times.

One lovely way to warm things up this time of year is to revel in the traditions of Valentine's Day, including the highly important wide distribution of well-made chocolate.

In this issue of *MILL*, we plunge headlong into the holiday, which falls this year on a Saturday night and promises to be a busy one at local restaurants. With that in mind, make those reservations early. You or your loved one might not care to opt for Friday, especially if either of you has a touch of paraskavedekatriaphobia and something romantic planned. (Our dining guide is on page 6.)

— KIRK ROSS



## GUIDLINES FOR V-DAY GIVING

BY MARGOT C. LESTER

You can recover from giving somebody a less-than-ideal birthday or Christmas present. But when it comes to Valentine's Day, love's not only not blind, but it ain't unconditional either. During my seven years as a love advice columnist for Match.com, I've heard horror stories from men and women about inappropriate, unoriginal and down-right tacky gifts that have caused everything from giggles to get-out-of-my-lives. Here is some of what I've learned:

Invest in each other. Surveys by Match.com and Jewelry.com found that a night of pampering, cuddling and being together with only simple gifts given is a perfectly acceptable way of spending Valentine's night. This doesn't give you carte blanche to cheap out though. Plan something that you both enjoy or that makes it clear to your sweetie that she or he is the object of your affection. (nudge, nudge)

CAUTION: If the thought of spending hours hanging out with your honey makes you wince, that's a good sign that you shouldn't be together in the first place. It may be time to exit stage left.

Do it yourself. Remember those hand-made Valentine's you created for your mama or daddy? They weren't destined for the Louvre, but your folks couldn't have been happier. You can bowl over your baby by making something by hand — candy, cupcakes, jewelry, a slide show, a card or a full-on romantic dinner.

SEE GIFTS PAGE 4

## MILL

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### ON THE COVER

Vanilla Love chocolates, made by Mary Butler of Carolina Confections, are filled with a velvety dark chocolate ganache and infused with a smooth vanilla flavor.  
PHOTO BY AVA BARLOW

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\* **could it be?!  
is it...  
no! SNOW?!**

\* **hat! gloves!  
where's my...  
ahh! scarf!!  
okay - snow -  
I'M READY!!!**

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