

ROMANCE

Mental Model

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We were approached by a client opening a new restaurant in six months. They want customers to try their restaurant and become regulars because the experience meets their criteria so completely. They asked us to determine these criteria.

Hypothesis: Expectations of the experience in a restaurant on the first date are high. If those expectations can be met, customers will add this restaurant to a short list of choices for a romantic hot spot.

Scenario: Brandon is a 44 year old college graduate. He has a good job that he's been at for many years. He owns his own home, and has a good disposable income. Eating out and trying new restaurants is one of his hobbies.

Brandon has recently asked out Laura on a first date. He asks Laura what kind of food she likes to help him choose the restaurant for their evening out. Laura says she likes everything, but is allergic to shellfish.

Brandon likes to choose a restaurant close to where his date lives. He isn't familiar with all of the restaurants near Laura's house, so he has to do some research to find the perfect spot.

He often uses *Scene Magazine* as a resource and sees an advertisement for our new restaurant opening in a week. He thinks that might be close to Laura's neighborhood. He does a Google search for their website to look at the location and a menu. Brandon wants to go all out on this first date hoping to impress Laura. He equates this with an expensive menu, but the food has to be good. The dishes look good and hit his price point.

He calls to make a reservation. In general, he doesn't like to have to wait for a table for more than about 1/2 hour. He prefers it to be much less on a first date. He asks the hostess several questions as well. He wants to know how many tables there are, he likes a first date to be at a smaller restaurant, he finds it more intimate. He also asks about live music. He wants to be able to hold a conversation with Laura without it being too loud. His first choice would be no live music, but quiet jazz is acceptable.

The hostess has been coached on listening for cues that indicate plans for a romantic dining experience. From his questions, she is sure this is what Brandon is after. She offers a table for 2 by the fireplace. She describes it as more intimate with mood lighting and farther away from the band.

She asks if he would like to pre-order a bottle of wine. They have a special selection available on their website. She then recommends their famous dessert for 2. She explains that it takes 1 hour to prepare, and if she marks it on the reservation, the timing will be perfect.

Brandon confirms his reservation for next Saturday night at 7 with the hostess. He thanks her for her customer service and hangs up feeling confident about his restaurant choice.

INTERVIEWS

Q: If you were going out to dinner on a 1st date with someone, how would you choose a restaurant? What criteria do you go by?

INTERVIEW 1

David

Age: 28

Ethnicity: White

Bio: single father, manager of a restaurant

- Nice neighborhood
- Pricey to show off to the date
- Not messy finger food
- Quiet
- If I'm driving, the closer the better to avoid a quiet, awkward car ride
- Serves alcohol
- Not known for kids
- Says something about my scene or personality
- Experience is more important than the food

INTERVIEW 2

Heath

Age: 25

Ethnicity: White

Bio: single, vet lab worker, vet student

- Social and busy so silence isn't awkward
- Unique place that can drive a conversation
- Relatively high price to show off to the date
- Simple food, no mess
- Decent neighborhood
- Comfortable seating
- Not overly dark and romantic, don't want to be cheesy

INTERVIEWS

Q: If you were going out to dinner on a 1st Date with someone, how would you choose a restaurant? What criteria do you go by?

INTERVIEW 3

Brandon

Age: 44

Bio: single, financially secure (good disposable income), confident, undergraduate degree

- smaller place / more intimate
- no live music, unless jazz or something quiet
- mood lighting
- go all out (expensive) to impress (second and third date, etc - back off so they don't get used to that)
- close to where she lives
- nothing too ethnic or spicy
- looks for good food and casual
- asks her what kind of food she likes and then he chooses the restaurant
- prefers picking her up to meeting her there
- doesn't get drunk

(NOT FIRST DATE)

- likes to experiment, go to a place neither have been before
- likes live music

INTERVIEW 4

James

Age: 37

Bio: no college degree, has job, not much disposable income, dysfunctional relationship with mom

- atmosphere
- food quality
- no ethnic
- picks person up
- sophisticated, softer lighting, intimate
- no live music, to have a conversation
- not too loud, drowned out by people or bar
- asks them what they like - then he picks the place
- likes to change it up, try something new
- wait time: no more than 1/2 hour, 40 min tops
- asks person about food requirements - allergies, vegetarian
- likes to go later, to time what goes next (night cap)

INTERVIEWS

Q: If you were going out to dinner on a 1st Date with someone, how would you choose a restaurant? What criteria do you go by?

INTERVIEW 5

George

Age: 48

Bio: single, MBA, makes good income, disposable income

- quality of food and drinks - fun, unique, different, ethnic
- trendy but casual, not pretentious
- not extremely loud
- new and popular the “the place to be”
- meets them at his place or their place and they take public transportation
- “Sex and the City”-ish urban feel
- dimly lit, fireplace, music in background
- cost not issue
- won't wait more than 30-45 mins tops
- ask what kind of food they like to eat or have favorite places - both throw out suggestions and then decide
- 7 pm-ish is the time

INTERVIEW 6

Don

Age: 30

Bio: single, financially secure, emotionally mature, loves his mom, disposable income

- ambiance
- wants it to be quiet, mood inducing, music, dimly lit
- price is important (more expensive the better)
- location (no ghetto!)
- he will drive further for a nicer location
- good view is a plus
- all about the experience and not the food / the food could suck but if it's a romantic experience it's a win

INTERVIEWS

Q: If you were going out to dinner on a 1st Date with someone, how would you choose a restaurant? What criteria do you go by?

INTERVIEW 7

Jason

Age: 30

Bio: single, emotionally mature, loves his mom, college educated, strong relationships, sensitive, secure

- based on environment: quiet, not crazy loud
- conversation is key as well as a nice environment
- he considers what the other person likes over his own
- good desserts... wants to have a reason to stay longer
- likes places with dinner for 2... fixed price for all sides and fixings
- choice based on history ... plays into relationship, forming memories
- price is not an issue
- location is not an issue
- would NOT go to dinner with a coupon
- restaurant that is open later... likes to eat later on past 8:00 pm
- food can be an aphrodisiac
- choose a place that is culturally responsible (no judgements being made based on race, sexual preference, etc.)
- place that has good music
- 7 pm-ish is the time.

INTERVIEW 8

Steve

Age: 41

Bio: single, loves his mom, college educated, secure, strong relationships

- authentic cuisine
- unique, place with a story
- character, history of the restaurant important
- non-chain
- quaint and small room, good atmosphere, private table
- quiet area is very important
- place to have a romantic experience
- not too noisy so that you can have good conversation
- don't want anything too pricey / not overly pompous chef where you pay too much for what you get
- important to research places that fit the above requirements
- will drive farther for a good experience

INTERVIEWS

Q: If you were going out to dinner on a 1st Date with someone, how would you choose a restaurant? What criteria do you go by?

INTERVIEW 9

Robert

Age: 34

Bio: emotionally mature, self-employed, disposable income, strong relationships, secure

- hip/trendy atmosphere
- a social but separated atmosphere (want to see faces I might recognize but not be mashed in with them)
- menu with a lot of options
- music is good but doesn't have to be live or loud... background noise is fine
- won't go anywhere with a long wait no matter how good the food is
- not picky on types of food
- want to get what i pay for
- stylish restaurant but not overly fancy
- don't like a place that is pretentious/pretentious atmosphere
- a good beer/drink selection is key

SYNTHESIS

Atmosphere	
Statement	Mentions
Quiet	7
Allows Good Conversation	6
Ambiance	5
The "It" Spot / Trendy	3
Social Atmosphere	2
Quaint	2
Romantic	2
Comfortable Seating	1
Fireplace	1
Place with a good View	1
Culturally Responsible (mixed, gay, etc..)	1

Cuisine	
Statement	Mentions
Good drink selection	2
Good desserts	1
Food can be an aphrodisiac	1
Authentic cuisine	5
Not messy finger food	2
Not ethnic	1
Not too spicy	1
Menu with lots of options	2
Food requirements (allergies, veggie)	1
No chain restaurants	3

Location	
Statement	Mentions
Urban Feel	2
Nice Location (not ghetto)	4
Drive Farther for a Good Experience	3
Close to where "Date" Lives	3
On Public Transportation	1

Entertainment	
Statement	Mentions
Place that has memories attached to it	1
Place with history (a story)	1
Mood music	3
No music	3

Price	
Statement	Mentions
More expensive to Impress Date	3
Not too Expensive	2
Will Pay More for Good Food	3

Outliers	
Statement	Mentions
Extended hours	1
Wait Time	5

MENTAL MODEL

ATMOSPHERE

- QUIET 7
- ALLOW CONVERSATION 6
- AMBIANCE 5
- TRENDY 3
- SOCIAL 2
- QUAINT 2
- ROMANTIC 2
- COMFY SEATING 1
- FIRE-PLACE 1
- PLACE WITH A VIEW 1
- CULTURALLY RESPONSIBLE 1

CUISINE

- AUTHENTIC 5
- NO CHAIN FOOD 3
- GOOD DRINK SELECTS 2
- NOT MESSY 2
- A LOT OF MENU OPTIONS 2
- GOOD DESSERTS 1
- FOOD CAN BE AFRICAN-DISIAC 1
- NOT ETHNIC 1
- NOT TOO SPICY 1
- FOOD REQ 1

LOCATION

- NICE AREA 4
- WILL DRIVE FAR FOR EXP 3
- CLOSE TO DATE 3
- URBAN FEEL 2
- PUBLIC TRANS 1

ENTERTAINMENT

- MOOD MUSIC 3
- NO MUSIC 3
- PLACE WITH MEMORIES 1
- PLACE WITH HISTORY 1

PRICE

- MORE \$\$\$ TO IMPRESS 3
- PAY MORE 4 GOOD FOOD 3
- NOT TOO \$\$\$ 2

OUTLIERS

- WAIT TIME 5
- EXTENDED HOURS 1

- Candle Light
- Private Seating
- Low Level Music
- Dimmer Switch Lights
- Art Work

- Organic Meat & Produce
- Visiting Chefs
- Options for Vegg, Veg, Allergies
- Top Shelf Alcohol
- Seasonal Ingredients

- Urban Research

- Juke Box
- Satellite Music Service
- House Band / Live Music

- Chef Recommendations
- Happy Hour
- Quality Ingredients

- Flexible Staff Scheduling
- Buzzers for waiting patrons
- Large Staff