



Anna's Wedding Blog Week 15—Hearts, Balloons, Sushi-- Oh My Valentine!

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Let me start by saying: A) I am a slight cynic, and B) I think Valentine's Day is a stupid holiday.

Not in the sense that showing love is stupid, but in the sense that a day has been set aside where folks feel pressured to show their love. (Shouldn't we do that without the Hallmark prompting?)

On top of that, those folks who are single feel bad for not having an Other. So, basically, V-Day boils down to either spending money on your loved one because you are told (by the media, marketers, etc.) that you have to, or it is spent feeling guilty that you have no one on which to spend/have money spent on you.

At least, those have been my basic thoughts of the holiday for the past two decades or so.

Now, this recently passed Valentine's Day, I thought I was in the clear. I mean, Michael and I are engaged, so obviously the celebration would be low key to nothing. I mean, that has been the case for the past two years when we were dating; now that we are officially getting married, we more than likely won't celebrate. That was what I thought, anyway.

But somehow, seemingly overnight, my Michael became a romantic. (I blame—er, thank—the freak snow storm.) I stood in the bathroom, getting ready for a snow-filled Sunday, then turned a corner, walked into the kitchen, and found waiting for me a Valentine's Day gift that would make any woman's heart melt like cheese in the microwave. On the kitchen table was not only a tiny gift bag (which from its shape and size I knew could only be jewelry!), but also a single orange rose (my favorite of all roses!), a huge heart-shaped balloon that declared "I Love You" and yes, even one of those oversized, massively huge greeting cards.

I didn't know what to say. For two years Valentine's Day for us had been more of an afterthought, a reason to get together with friends and celebrate our love for everyone we cared about in our lives. This year, though, it was different. It was as if, I don't know, we have formed some kind of unspoken bond beyond any we had formed before; I guess you would call that the effect of getting married. You just know each other.

Not only did Michael surprised me with an amazing jade bracelet (thanks to the advice from the consultants at Athena Jewelers in downtown, also the folks who resized my engagement ring at a stellar price, www.athenajewelers.com), rose, balloon and card, but was also had the opportunity to celebrate the day with his family, as his mom and dad drove down from Cherokee County for a lovely lunch at East West Bistro (www.eastwestbistro.com). I'm pretty sure— as he and his parents would also agree— that East West offers the best Sunday menu in town. Brunch? Sure. Lunch? Also there. And Bloody Mary's? Yes please, with extra olives and pickled green beans to boot.

A hint for brides-to-be: Get an in with your soon-to-be in-laws by inviting them to a holiday brunch and showing them a good time via Athens on a Sunday (read: Bloody Mary central). If they don't just love you after that, well, they will. Trust me. (I hope...)

Our Valentine's Day celebration didn't end with our snow-filled family brunch. As part of his Valentine's gift, I took Michael out of the Classic City and into another city: Atlanta. Having once been a food and entertainment reporter in the state's capitol, I take every chance I can get to show Michael around my favorite places in the ATL.

This tour de Atlanta took us to Genki, (www.genkiatl.com) a fabulous sushi restaurant at The Prado in Sandy Springs. (Also with a location in Buckhead, FYI.) There, we dined on the sashimi assortment (raw fish, my favorite; here was a plate of it big enough to feed me for days, literally. I'm still snacking on it); we consumed the holiday special, the Cupid Roll; we sipped on the Valentine's Day fruity red drink, Me Love You Long Time; and we made great friends with our waiter, who's real name escapes me, but who's DJ name is Johnny Neptune. If anyone is in the neighborhood for a house DJ in skinny jeans and punked-up hair...

Needless to say, spending Valentine's Day with family then with uber-friendly and cheeky sushi folks had, perhaps, made for one of the best Valentine's Day I can remember. No, scratch that. This WAS the best Valentine's Day I have ever had.

Oh, the wedding. Well, I do have news to report there, too, but not much. We have the band booked— Corn Eyed Trout, an awesome bluegrass band located on St. Simons Island. And my mother has overtly stated that I will have a wedding cake. I tossed around the idea of no cake, or maybe cute cupcakes, or even— gasp!— my favorite, rice crispy treats.

Those ideas did not go over too well. So, a cake it is.

In reality, my mind is still stuck on the fact that Valentine's Day was just picture perfect, and that I know I have dozens and dozens of equally great days and years ahead of me with Michael, to celebrate not only our love for each other, but also our love for our loved ones, for those folks who enhance our life and make everything a bit more golden. To know that is to, I believe, know real love and real happiness. And that was the best Valentines gift I could ever get. Although that bracelet was pretty dang good...