

Date Nights

Cheap Date

Bimbo's Pizza (338 E. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo) is "a treat in Michigan smuggled out of Italy," as the sweatshirts and t-shirts for sale read. A local treasure, Bimbo's celebrated its 50th anniversary in December. Its thin crust pizza is made up front and sliced into squares, a Bimbo's signature. Renovations on the brick building began in 2002, resulting in a warm, inviting interior that matches the "Historic Kalamazoo" style that much of downtown is adopting. The menu is simple: pizza, though you may order a ham, turkey or roast beef sandwich or a hot dog. Split a medium pizza with two toppings for \$13.40 and add a drink with complimentary refills for a cheap date that supports a Kalamazoo institution.

When asked about Bimbo's success, owner Ron Smilanich attributes it to the strength of the pizza. "We've been consistent and haven't changed a thing."

Conveniently located about five minutes away is the **Little Theatre** (WMU campus, Kalamazoo) on the corner of Oakland Dr. and Oliver. A part of Western Michigan University's East Campus, the Little Theatre is a refurbished movie theater that hosts the Kalamazoo and Western Film Societies in addition to other groups. The Japan Foundation is holding its Japanese Film Festival at the Little Theatre and is screening four movies there, starting with a film in January and one in March. For February, *Always - Sunset on Third Street*, a multi-Japanese Academy Award winning film based on a beloved Japanese comic book series about a residential area in Tokyo in 1958, will show on Feb. 17 at 7 p.m. The next Wednesday, *Memories of Matsuko* will show. Based on a bestselling novel, this film is a fantasy musical blending realism with computer animation. Both films are open to the public and are free. *Joanna Dykhuis*

First Date

First dates create lasting impressions. Worrying about the height of your hair, the freshness of your breath and what kind of chewing gum to chomp can be overwhelming. But selecting an exciting date itinerary can be downright daunting.

If you're thinking of a mid-day rendezvous or a casual, afternoon meet-up, mosey over to **Bell's Brewery and Eccentric Café** (355 E. Kalamazoo Ave., Kalamazoo). Push your chairs close together and blush over the quirky, but alluring menu. Sample a Wild Game Sandwich, which features either ostrich or bison. Even the Garden Salad has special touches. Veggies and mixed greens with a little slab of luxurious goat cheese and grilled portabella slices provide plenty of bite sharing opportunities. Come for lunch and stay for the bustle of the night crowd.



Sometimes, first dates immediately reveal potential compatibility, or crush any hope for a second date. Maybe your date is a self-professed literary genius. Or, during a moment of late night, instant messenger pomposity, you swear you've memorized the dictionary. Lay it all bare at Open Scrabble at **Schuler Books & Music** (2660 28th St., Grand Rapids) every Thursday at 6 p.m. Grab a snack from the Chapbook Café, save your letter "Q" for maximum points, and don't let on that you're using an iPhone app to cheat.

If you are going for an unforgettable experience, hop over to **Crazy Bounce** (12255 Felch St, Holland). This inflatable emporium of fun features 14 enormous, inflatable structures. Slide down a replica of the Titanic (yes, it's sinking) or bound around a giant cage. If whiplash sets in, wander over to the arcade room and get nostalgic. Avoid embarrassment and don't forget, clean socks are required. *Audria Larsen*



Outdoor Dates

Sledding has long been one of the most romantic outdoor events. For those who don't want to seek out, and continuously scale, a mammoth neighborhood hill, **Pando Park** (8076 Belding Rd, Rockford) has you covered. The park features Michigan's first hill exclusively for snow tubing. It also rents out snow tubes so you and your honey can take a piece of your childhood back together by careening down its towering slope. One of the best features to the park is a lift that attaches to each tube and drags riders back to the top. No more spending three quarters of the afternoon climbing uphill. Aerobics is not very romantic.



offers horse-drawn carriage rides through downtown Grand Rapids and the greater West Michigan. For rate information, visit classiccarriagellc.com. *Jayson Bussa*

If sledding isn't enough to get the adrenaline pumping, Pando offers hills for snowboarding, skiing and snurfing, which is a crossbreed of snowboarding and surfing. Check out pandopark.com for details on rates and rental options.

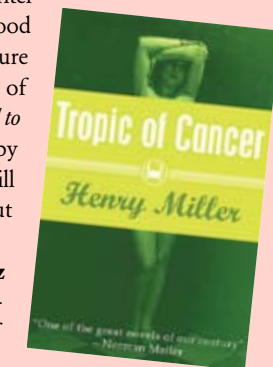
Savvy snowbirds can make their way to **Bittersweet Ski Resort** in Otsego (600 River Rd) for some large-scale skiing and snowboarding. Lift tickets are \$28, or \$36 dollars on the weekend. If you want to learn the ropes of skiing and snowboarding as a couple, stick to the beginner hill for the day, as passes cost \$24 and \$31. Visit skibittersweet.com for full information. Or try **Cannonsburg Ski Area** (cannonsburg.com). Lift tickets are \$28 and \$35 and they also offer snow tubing.

Cap that date off by either recovering from hypothermia in your big toe, or nighttime outdoor ice skating at a number of locations, including **Rosa Parks Circle** (Grand Rapids) and **Millennium Park** (Kalamazoo). Or, grab a thermos of hot chocolate and give **Classic Carriage LLC** a holler. The company

Sexy Date

Regardless of the reason, all types of lovers deserve a "sexy date" every once in a blue moon (which *actually* just occurred this past New Year's Eve). According to the Farmer's Almanac, the stars have aligned, and it's time to heat things up.

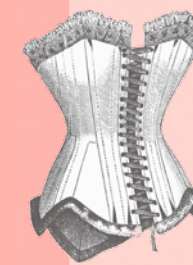
Head to **Book Village 2** (214 College Ave, Holland), and pick up (almost) any book by Henry Miller, like *Tropic of Cancer*. Banned in innumerable countries, the lurid accounts of his affairs, including lyric tales of his long-term relationship with famed writer Anias Nin get you in an amorous mood when read aloud. If reading saucy literature makes you feel silly, then opt for a copy of the classic, 1969 tome, *All You Ever Wanted to Know About Sex* But Were Afraid to Ask*, by Dr. David Reuben. This hilarious how-to will make you laugh and then want to try out your new, outdated findings.



Sharing is sexy, which makes **San Chez Bistro**, (38 Fulton St. Grand Rapids), a perfect dinner choice. Featuring a full menu of delectable tapas, the small, gourmet dishes are designed for sharing. If you're on a modest budget, a few choice dishes will satisfy, like the Esparragos en Salsa

Romescos, with roasted asparagus, romesco, garlic, Marcona almonds and lemon. If the evening is an extravagant one, treat your date to a wide range of tapas to sample. It is well known that ginger is an aphrodisiac. Whet your kissing lips and sip on stimulating aperitifs, like a Jengibre Espumoso, concocted from Cordoniu Cava, ginger infused, simple syrup, star anise, and Chinese five-spice.

After dinner, get adventurous and check out **Cirilla's** boutique, (3525 Plainfield Ave NE, Grand Rapids). Featuring everything from neon-pink corsets and rubber shorts, to adult toys and videos, the shop can provide for most all of your sexy needs, like edible, flavored undies (in case you scrimped on dessert at dinner). *Audria Larsen*



MOOD MUSIC

Whether your date has been sexy, cheap or outdoors (which could be interesting if it weren't February in Michigan), the mood should be set when you head back to the love shack. Be prepared with a well-stocked playlist featuring some of these classics (and soon-to-be classics). **COMPILED BY KIM KIBBY**

Al Green
"Love and Happiness"
I'm Still in Love with You

Andrew Bird
"Masterswarm"
Noble Beast

Arcade Fire
"Crown of Love"
Funeral

Aretha Franklin
"Rock Steady"
Young, Gifted and Black

Barry White
"Never, Never Gonna Give You Up"
Stone Gon'

The Beatles
"I Want You (She's So Heavy)"
Abbey Road

Beck
"Debra"
Midnite Vultures

Bill Withers
"Use Me"
Still Bill

Bon Iver
"For Emma"
For Emma, Forever Ago

Bows
"Luftsang"
Cassidy

Cat Power
"Lost Someone"
Jukebox
"Sea of Love"
The Covers Record

Curtis Mayfield
"Give Me Your Love"
Superfly

Daft Punk
"Something About Us"
Discovery

Damien Rice
"The Blower's Daughter"
O

Devendra Banhart
"Lover"
Smokey Rolls Down Thunder Canyon

Elliott Smith
"Say Yes"
Either/Or

Explosions in the Sky
"Your Hand In Mine"
The Earth Is Not a Cold Dead Place

Feist
"Secret Heart"
Let It Die
"Brandy Alexander"
The Reminder

Fleet Foxes
"Your Protector"
Fleet Foxes

Interpol
"Take You on a Cruise"
Antics

Flight of the Conchords
"Business Time"
The Distant Future EP

Flying Lotus
"Melt!"
Los Angeles

Hope Sandoval & The Warm Inventions
"Drop"
Bavarian Fruit Bread

Lamb
"Gabriel"
What Sound

Led Zeppelin
"I Can't Quit You Baby"
Coda

Lovage
"Stroker Ace"
"Book of the Month"
Music to Make Love to Your Old Lady By

Magnetic Fields
"It's Only Time"
i

Marvin Gaye
"I Want You"
I Want You

Massive Attack
"Angel"
Mezzanine

Mazzy Star
"Fade Into You"
So Tonight That I Might See

Miles Davis
"It Never Entered My Mind"
Miles Davis Quintet

Nina Simone
"I Want a Little Sugar in My Bowl"
Sings the Blues

Otis Redding
"Try a Little Tenderness"
Remember Me

PJ Harvey
"Ecstasy"
Rid of Me
"C'mon Billy"
To Bring You My Love

Portishead
"Glory Box"
Dummy

Prince
"Kiss"
Parade

Radiohead
"All I Need"
In Rainbows

The Rolling Stones
"Break You Off"
Phrenology

The Roots
"Break You Off"
Phrenology

Sigur Rós
Anything, really.

Sufjan Stevens
"To Be Alone With You"
Seven Swans

The Walkmen
"Red Moon"
You & Me

The White Stripes
"Ball & Biscuit"
Elephant

Wilco
"I'm the Man Who Loves You"
Yankee Hotel Foxtrot
"On and On and On"
Sky Blue Sky

ICELANDIC MAGIC

When she's not busy pummeling paparazzi, Björk is generally making intriguing music. Vespertine is quite possibly her best, and its gorgeous soundscape combined with her laid-bare vocals create the perfect atmosphere for intimacy. Plus, she's hot.



Björk. *Vespertine*
Key tracks: "Hidden Place," "Frosti," "Pagan Poetry," "Unison"



Leslie Feist