

Dinner dates being replaced with 'just drinks'



Walt Disney's "Lady and the Tramp" (Disney)

By **Lindsay Weber**
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The iconic scene from Disney's "Lady and the Tramp" paints the picture of finding true love over a shared meal. Two lives meeting at the center of a spaghetti noodle, and that's amore!

But that was 1955. Fast forward to the Tinder age, when recent polls have shown that first dates over dinner are being replaced with simple public meetings over coffee.

Dating coach Patti Feinsein said she has seen a large shift in first-date trends.

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"You used to meet someone through friends or through someone from the neighborhood. Those were the days," Feinsein said. "No matter where you go, everything now is like one big blind date, and no one likes that."

Feinsein said there is so much misrepresentation on online dating sites that people don't want to invest much time or money until they make sure the potential matches they are meeting are legitimate.

Fellow matchmaker Stef Safran sees the same shift.

"What's disappointing to me is the casualness of dating in general," said Safran. "I think that dinner on the first date is going to go away. I don't think there's a way around that. Nowadays, so many people are rejoining the dating market at different life stages. The expectation is just different."

Safran said one of her rules for male clients is to avoid Saturday night dinner dates in favor of a weekend brunch instead.

"One thing I definitely notice is that, since people go on so many first dates that do not lead to second dates, it can be extremely costly," Safran said. "I have also noticed that due to the nature of people always being connected to their friends or their job during the week, I have started suggesting weekend brunch dates that allow for clients to be more relaxed and less connected, with a more structured timeline. Dates can always be extended, but it's hard to shorten them."

Brittany Lee, 32, of Chicago, is no stranger to online dating. She takes a practical approach to her first dates:

"Drinks! Dinner is certainly an option, but it's likely you've met the person on a dating app, so I'd keep it simple," said Lee. "If you've met them through a friend or in person somewhere before and had an actual conversation, dinner might stand a chance, but this is the world we live in. I say grab dinner on the second date."

Lee said technology has made dating more efficient.

"You could probably see every movie playing in a theater by Saturday, but who has the time?" Lee said. "Clearly technology has changed the name of the game. We live in a fast-paced world, so coffee or drinks just work better."

Feinsein said quick, interview-like dates are more of the norm now.

"A lot of them aren't even 20 minutes. They're more like five minutes, if you can even get past that. It's about saving time and money," Feinsein said.

Dating can be tough, regardless of the venue. Lee's advice?

"Just keep swimming!"

Lindsay Weber is a freelancer.