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# 'I've never had a bad date'

**First Dates maitre d' Fred Sirieix on why we should tuck into romance**

**NEW REALITY TV**  
**First Dates**  
TUESDAY / C4 / 9.00PM

**T**he course of true love never did run smooth. But, luckily for the singletons in

C4's *First Dates* restaurant, maitre d' Fred Sirieix is on hand to make sure there aren't too many embarrassing moments or cringeworthy awkward silences.

The charismatic 42-year-old spends most of his time working as the general manager of another swanky London restaurant, Galvin at Windows, but has won himself a cult following with his philosophical musings on love as he takes guests to meet their dates.

Fred, who joined the show in series three, is a father-of-two in a very happy, long-term relationship. Here, he tells *TV Times* why, unlike the diners he meets, he's always found romance easy to digest...

**First Dates has become a national obsession. Why do you think the show is such a hit?**

I think it resonates with everyone because finding love is something that's very close to our hearts. People like the fact that everybody on the programme is genuinely trying to find love and we are matchmaking people to that effect; we're

not putting people up to fail or have horrible dates. We love it when a couple get on.

**How does working in the First Dates restaurant compare to your day job?**

Well, I'm not rushed off my feet like I am at work! On the show we don't have so many tables and everything is very organised because I have to take the time to talk to people and soak up the atmosphere. I never know what's going on in people's conversations at the tables, though – that's not the job of a maitre d'!

**Do you feel nervous for the singletons on the show?**

I don't feel nervous for them but I'm on their side and looking out for them all the time. I've met a lot of people in the last year or so who feel scarred for life because of past dating experiences, and it stops them from being open. I try to

make them feel a bit better.

**What's the worst mistake you spot people making on dates?**

The worst

is when you want to be on a date but, at the same time, your body and your words tell the other person that you *don't* want to be there. Of course, you can spill food on your shirt, but that's just an accident, whereas bad body language or not being as enthusiastic as you want to be can put a dent on what could have been a very good date. There's always a way to rescue a bad date, though, but only if both people want to.

**Do you think a restaurant is a good place for a first date? Wouldn't it be better to go to a pub with a quick escape route?**

I think a restaurant is very good, you just have to be confident within yourself and take it as it comes. Going for a meal forces you to take time for the date, which is something people never do. When you take the time, things happen – relationships blossom and flourish. Just enjoy it.

**Let's not forget, Fred, your business is gastronomy, not romance. Is it weird that people think of you as a dating guru?**

Yes and no. My brother thinks it's very funny! I'm a normal guy with a normal job and I don't think I'm

an expert. I speak my mind and I don't mind telling you how I feel, but really there are a lot of similarities between the art of love and the art of service – you need to start by having faith in yourself and understanding who you are and what you can deliver.

**You're very settled with your partner and two children. But do you remember going on any bad dates in your younger years?**

I've never had a bad date. I don't have any problem with dating. A lot is to do with how comfortable and confident you feel in your own skin, it depends if you've been hurt before and if you can handle it. A lot of people can't because the pain stays inside their heart and they are forever scarred.

**Isn't it uncomfortable making small talk with a stranger?**

It's true, it's not easy for everybody. Some feel awkward about saying hello and whether to greet the person with a kiss. Personally, if you're on a date, I think you should stand up and give a very warm welcome to someone and make them feel like, 'Wow, this guy is happy to see me.' It's just good social skills.

**Do you think it's possible to be single and happy or must we all strive to find 'the one'?**

It is possible to be single and happy and to be in a relationship and unhappy. You have to look at yourself, see what you like, see what you want. It's our life and we shouldn't be looking to live it according to the Joneses. There's a lot of pressure, though, and all of us can fall for it. It's about confidence, self-esteem and self knowledge.

**We're now on series five of the show and First Dates is getting even more popular. Are there any exciting changes planned to the format?**

The essence of the show is the dating and the people that are on the programme. That's not going to change, but other things might.

We're talking about lots of different things, but I've got to keep it secret! **Please tell us you're not leaving any time soon, though?**

I'm committed to the show, it's a good gig and I like being part of something good! EMMA BULLIMORE

**FIRST DATES IS PREVIEWED ON PAGES 58-59**

“There are similarities between the art of love and the art of service”



Affairs of the heart have never been a thorny issue for Fred

Photographed for *TV Times* by Dan Goldsmith

The outlook is rosy for *First Dates'* philosopher and his staff (right)

