

Add silver to deep red for sophisticated look

Q. My roommate and I are planning a Valentine's party for some of our closest friends, including our boyfriends. We're all in our early 20s and the men, in particular, never openly admit to romantic sentiments. What are your suggestions for a party that isn't too commercial, and is keeping with the Valentine's theme?

A. What has come down to us as a St. Valentine's Day celebration has a long history to draw upon ever since the Roman Emperor Claudius II beheaded one of the several martyrs named Valentinus in A.D. 269.

The observance of this early momentous event gradually shifted to a romantic theme because Valentine was supposed to have fallen in love with his jailer's daughter before his beheading — and had sent her a note signed, "from your Valentine."

By the 1890s, when the holiday had become thoroughly commercialized, a typical Valentine card pictured women dressed in scarlet with blue and green shawls. The men would be dressed in lavender trousers, yellow vests, blue overcoats, and green or crimson cravats.



all about color
Helen Diane Vincent

You can have a lot of fun picking up on this — 19th century Valentine card colors by incorporating them into your decorations. If your friends cared to go along with the idea, have them dress up in contemporary versions of 19th century attire. The results will be a lot more festive than adhering exclusively to the conventional red and white colors sold for Valentine parties.

You could also incorporate another ancient tradition of pulling names from a box for partners to whom one pledges loyalty for the year. Translate this into drawing names for dance partners or for couples who will be expected to entertain the rest of the guests. Incidentally, the Valentine box we see today filled with candy was originally intended to hold names of young men and women intent on romance.

An alternate idea is to work with the conventional bright red and white Valentine party decor, but add deeper reds and silver to the color scheme to make it more sophisticated and interesting.

Q. I want to give my new boyfriend a gift for St. Valentine's Day, but I'm having difficulty figuring out what he might like. His apartment looks like a typical bachelor's pad with no special color or design

theme; and his clothing is also not outstanding in any special way. He's well-liked and gets along with most people, not making unusual demands upon them. Where do I start?

A. You can look for clues to your new boyfriend's personality by analyzing how he relates to possessions. But as recent sociology research reminds us, possessions are not always things, they can also be people and memories — especially childhood memories.

It appears from what you've described, that your friend gravitates, not to the significance of physical things, but to people as possessions. In order to give him a meaningful gift he will remember, you have to translate his predisposition into things, or events that relate to his relationship with people.

Of the many appropriate ideas that come to mind, a party that includes his high school classmates or well-liked relatives could help to endear you to him — and be his idea of a perfect gift.

Helen Vincent, an area free

lance writer, will give a class at the Village Club of Bloomfield Hills 10-11:30 a.m. Thursday, March 1 on knowing understanding your color responses and how to apply color to your life. For information, call 644-7202.

Ballet auditions

Open auditions for a Spring production of the classic ballet, "Cinderella," will be at 2 p.m. Sunday at Miss Jean's Dance Arts, 32625 Seven Mile Road, Livonia.

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BETTER THAN NEW! Totally updated Colonial displays neutral decor with a flowing floor plan. Features huge country kitchen with vaulted ceiling and down-air range, 2 bay windows, glass enclosed porch and magnificent master suite with sitting area. Offers 4 bedrooms, fireplace and spacious family room. \$249,500 626-9100

MUST BE SEEN TO BELIEVE! Very private setting in popular sub is the location of this Tudor Ranch. Boasting large living room with 2 doorways to deck with stairway to in-ground pool, formal dining room with bay window, 3 bedrooms and great room. Finished walk-out basement with 2nd fireplace and load glass window are a few of the many extras. \$238,500 478-5000 07-B-3371

SERENE COUNTRY SETTING! Snuggled on mature tree ravine lot with spring fed stream this charming home offers so many updates. Features marble sills, some hardwood floors, 3 bedrooms, 2 fireplaces, study, 2 baths and large family room. Improvements include new roof, screened porch and much more. \$154,900 851-8100 06-B-3472

PRIVATE COURT SETTING! Farmington Hills Colonial sets on large fenced lot. Flowing floor plan includes 4 bedrooms, large family room with wood burning fireplace, formal dining room, central air, breakfast room, living room and 2 1/2 baths. Great family home! \$144,900 626-9100 02-B-3773

PRIZE PACKAGE! Rambling brick Ranch sits on spacious tree lot in rolling neighborhood. Presents hardwood floors, natural fireplace in living room, regal family room, 3 bedrooms, finished basement and formal dining room. Great location near expressways, shopping and schools! \$124,900 626-9100 02-A-3817

LOTS OF LIVING SPACE IN THIS PLEASING BRICK RANCH HOME! Complete with 3 bedrooms, lovely living room, fireplace in family room, kitchen with breakfast nook and 2 1/2 baths. Recent improvements include new furnace, patio, carpet and verticals. Great neighborhood with BIRMINGHAM Schools. \$97,800 846-6000

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CAPTIVATING CONDO! Best location in quiet complex overlooks garden and clubhouse. Updated throughout this condo's open floor plan features full mirrored wall in dining room, 2 spacious bedrooms, recessed lighting, newer appliance kitchen and 1 car garage. Great buy! \$84,900 626-9100 02-B-3758

FOR THE YOUNG EXECUTIVE. Spectacular Townhouse offers openness and space. Complete with all appliance kitchen, 3 bedrooms, wood burning fireplace, formal dining room, gracious living room, and finished basement. Superb location convenient to expressways, shopping and airport. \$84,900 626-9100 02-B-3228

WARM AND COZY! Located in Cranbrook Village sub this sharp Ranch comes complete with new kitchen with breakfast nook, great room with wood burning fireplace and doorwall leading to in-ground pool, hardwood floors, 3 bedrooms and basement with rec room and exercise room. Professionally landscaped lot. \$84,900 626-9100

LOVELY DOLL HOUSE WITH BIRMINGHAM SCHOOLS! Nestled amongst mature trees, this super sharp 4 bedroom, 1 1/2 bath Cape Cod is completely neutral. Features remodeled kitchen, hardwood floors, living room with fireplace, newer roof and furnace and 2 car garage. Move right in — it won't last long! \$81,900 689-8900

NICE TO COME HOME TO! Sharp Ranch home offers country quiet setting with large heavily wooded lot. Features 3 bedrooms, cozy family room for gatherings, formal living room, carpet throughout, inviting patio and porch, 2 car garage and lots of storage. \$79,900 626-9100 02-B-3644

CRANBROOK VILLAGE RANCH! This sharp 3 bedroom home is ready to be moved into. Features hardwood floors, spacious living room, formal dining room, new kitchen and finished basement with neutral carpet and is maintenance free. \$73,900 626-9100 02-B-3769

GREAT PRICE, LOCATION AND CONDO! Tastefully decorated in neutral tones throughout this Farmington Hills Condo is perfect for the first time buyers. Comes complete with 1 bedroom, splendid living room, formal dining room, and well equipped kitchen. Offers vertical blinds, central air and balcony. \$44,900 626-9100

PACK YOUR BAGS AND MOVE RIGHT IN! Priced for a quick sell this Ranch Condo is sharp. Features one spacious bedroom, 1 bath, large living room, central air, carpet and new carpet. Come check it out! \$33,900 626-9100 02-B-3689

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