

# CAN THIS BE LOVE?

## OH NO, NOT NEW YEAR'S EVE!

### Dos and don'ts for the night that's seldom perfect

New Year's Eve is coming—again. That might not be such welcome news if your past experiences with this holiday have been disappointing: if the party you threw in 1985 was, at its apex, attended by seven people; if the surprise celebration your partner planned in 1986 ended abruptly when the scenic glass elevator taking you to a rooftop restaurant stalled and was not reactivated until midnight, at which time you found out how the ball feels coming down in Times Square; if, due to a snowstorm, your trip to a country inn in 1987 was terminated at the 7-Eleven four miles from your home.

While nobody but a presidential candidate would promise you a disaster-free New Year's Eve, adhering to the following *dos* and *don'ts* can help ensure that *this* year's celebration doesn't make the last three look good.

First of all, *don't* expect too much of the evening—no more, certainly, than you expect of your partner's attempts to make hollandaise sauce on the first night in four years that he offers to prepare dinner. *Don't* expect the chimes of midnight to herald the dawn of a new era in your relationship, one in which your partner *won't* accuse you of neglect if you forget to replenish the empty tissue dispenser in the bathroom, but *will*, when the occasion calls for it, remember the name of your one living aunt. Also, while it's true that many couples get engaged at the stroke of twelve, *don't* assume this is the scenario your partner has planned, unless you want to spend the first moments of the New Year comparing him unfavorably to a can of tuna fish.

*Do* realize that your partner's notion of the perfect New Year's Eve might be different from your own, and that his may not include ordering-in Chinese and going to bed at 12:03. Avoid nasty surprises by discussing plans in advance. Tell him well ahead of time, for example, that if he thinks you're going to any soiree given by the same person whose last New Year's Eve party included a game in which all of the guests had to try to fit into the stall shower together, he's got another thing coming. Be sure, too, that he knows you make it a point of honor never to go to a party with someone wearing a funny hat.

*Don't* repeat past holiday mistakes, especially those that resulted in you and your partner having your first conversation of the new year some time in the second half of February. If you spent the final hours of 1987 with four of your partner's old army buddies, guys who think that blowing beer foam into one another's faces is the height of sophisticated revelry, make it clear that this year you want to spend the evening with a group of people whose collective I.Q. is *higher* than 47.

*Do* learn from other couples' experiences by asking your friends to tell you about their best and worst New Year's Eves, even though this means you will have to watch some of them cry.

If you decide to be hosts together, *do* divide up the entertaining chores evenly, so that you don't wind up making the punch, the quiche, the salad and the chocolate mousse, while your partner's contribution to the party consists of taking his ship-in-the-bottle down

from the living room mantel, so that it won't be knocked off accidentally during the festivities. Apportioning responsibilities fairly might ensure that you do not usher in the New Year by ushering your partner out of the house for several days.

*Do* try to defray arguments over dress by telling your partner in advance not to get his hopes up, that you do *not* plan to wear one of Cher's old outfits.

*Do* make New Year's resolutions, but *don't* make them for your partner, who just might feel that *he* is the one who should decide to walk into his boss's office at nine A.M. on January second and announce that he's not going to take any more guff, and that if he doesn't get an office with carpet instead of linoleum, he's out of there. After all, you wouldn't want him to resolve that during the upcoming year you will throw out every piece of clothing you bought and wore less than twice during the nineteen eighties.

Finally, to make sure that your visions of a perfect New Year's Eve don't prove as persistently elusive as your visions of a perfect home permanent, *do* avoid traditional problems by observing the holiday in nontraditional ways. Be inventive. Set your clocks ahead so that midnight arrives at your house at nine P.M., before either of you can get cranky. To be really safe, celebrate in July.

by Bette-Jane Raphael

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