Fabulous does...

A FIRST DATE WITH FRED SIRIEIX

We have dinner with the 43-year-old French maître d’ of Channel 4’s First Dates and talk kissing, chat-up lines and what not to eat if romance is on the menu.

Where Galvin At Windows, London Hilton, Park Lane

Happy Valentine’s Day, Fred! What were you up to before First Dates began?
Running a restaurant, which I still do now. The First Dates producers called and asked me to do the show. I’m not a dating guru. I’ve got opinions, but I’m not an expert – I’m just happy in my life. I have a partner [Alex, 42] and two beautiful children [Andrea, 11, and Lucien, six]. Two is plenty, I’m not planning on having any more!

Do you remember your first date?
I was 12 and I was at a camp with other children. There was a very pretty girl with long brown hair. We went horse riding and held hands – and kissed in a tent! After camp, we sent each other postcards with horses on them. It didn’t last long.

Are French or British people more romantic?
It depends. I’ve been in England 23 years – that’s longer than I lived in France. Everyone has this idea: “He should do this or she should do that.” There’s no “should”. Appreciate what you have, drop your expectations and believe in the love that’s there.

Are there other customers in the First Dates restaurant when the dates are filmed?
We have background daters for atmosphere. They’re real customers and everyone’s on a first date. Everyone’s matched with their date, but they don’t wear microphones, so we don’t hear their conversations.

What’s the best chat-up line you’ve heard?
A chat-up line opens up the possibility of a connection – it’s the hook. It doesn’t matter what the line is, as long as it opens the door. You might hear a chat-up line on the show and think it’s good, but it’s only as good as the recipient finds it. You’ve got to be in the moment and connect – and seal it with a kiss!

What’s the best advice you have for dating?
Know who you are and what you want. When you go on a date, open up and take it as it comes. Be friendly, be nice, make eye contact and smile – give love a chance. We have ideas like you can’t kiss on a first date, but life’s too short – who cares? If you don’t click, c’est la vie!

Any big no-nos?
Don’t drink too much, and avoid spaghetti. You know the film Lady And The Tramp? It’s not going to work in real life. Don’t do it.

Can you spot straight away when a couple are going to click?
Sometimes. I observe people all day in my job. I’ve been doing this for 25 years, so I’ve built up a bank of knowledge. I like the couples that succeed. Adam and Dan, the gay guys with beards, were funny. I liked Sandra and Billy, the older couple. Sandra danced with me, saying: “Fred, you’re my man!”

Do people ask you for dating advice?
All the time. People talk to me in the street because the show makes us look at how we approach love ourselves. People send me messages asking for advice. My answers are short and sweet, but I always reply. I get in a taxi and the driver says: “We love that programme.” Even 80 year olds like it!

Fred does over 300 press-ups every morning – which explains his super-trim physique!

Fred goes boxing and is inspired by Muhammad Ali.

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Fred is general manager at Galvin At Windows. Visit Galvinatwindows.com and follow @galvinatwindows.