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# Valentine's Day purchases help boost revenue for businesses

Local businesses happily await the boom the holiday brings after a normally slow January shopping period

By Beau Eastes  
Freelance Reporter

For most couples, Valentine's Day is a time to express love, but for small business owners nationwide, Cupid's return is a lifesaver.

"Valentine's Day is a rock," said Mike West, whose MW Kitchens Inc. owns and operates Mona Lizza Ristorante & Bar, 3 Square Bar and Grill, The Dive Bar and Grill, and West Brothers River Ranch. "It doesn't move no matter what the economy is. The National Restaurant Association says Valentine's and Mother's Day are the busiest of the year for restaurants, but I'd be willing to bet for us it will this next Saturday."

Many small businesses eagerly await Feb. 14 every year after slow January sales.

"Fifteen percent of our yearly business will be done in the two days before Valentine's Day," said Laura Betty, the manger at the Euphoria Chocolate Company on 17th Avenue and Willamette Street. Graduation, Easter and Mother's Day are all big for her business, but no holiday is as critical as Valentine's Day, Betty added.

"A tremendous amount of preparation goes into the holiday," local florist Pat Brooks said.

Brooks, whose family owns Eugene Flower Home, began setting up the Valentine's Day store display immediately after New Year's.

"It's a busy week, especially to take care of everyone like we want," she said. "We try to make every order special, so quite a few extra hours go into the holiday."

Along with the extra hours for her employees, Brooks' store also doubles its delivery fleet from two to four vehicles during the Valentine's Day rush.

Jeweler Dave Belcher, co-owner of Gold Conspiracy Jewelers, agrees.

"It's pretty big. We'll get a lot of men shopping late on Friday and even Saturday. The Christmas month is our biggest event, and Mother's Day is second, but Valentine's Day



Danielle Hickey Photo Editor

Eugene Flower Home owner Pat Brooks arranges flowers in preparation for Valentine's Day.

isn't too far behind that."

The local luxury-travel industry is also feeling the economic surge from Valentine's Day.

"We're always looking forward to February," said Abed Succar, owner of Abed's Eugene Limousine Service. "The whole week is a boom for us, as people who want to beat the weekend rush will do something special before Saturday."

Ambrosia restaurant owner Armen Kevrekian shares similar sentiments.

"We expect Thursday and Friday to be busier nights than usual, along with Saturday," he said. "People like to beat the crowd."

Perhaps the only economic drawback to this year's celebration of love is that it falls on a Saturday.

"It robs from the weekend, but beggars can't be choosers," West said.

"Regardless, we're glad to see it coming."

Along with the economic shot in the arm, West also noted that Valentine's Day is an excellent event to market in-house.

"It's a great time to make an impression on people who we don't normally see in our restaurants. Ideally, after their Valentine's Day experience they'll become more occasional diners."

Kevrekian said the holiday's theme is an added bonus to the economic upswing it brings.

"It's always a good time, being around happy people on the holiday," he said. "Of course, people that feel good also like to spend money."

Beau Eastes is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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