



richie's rendezvous
creative dating ideas



HANGING OUT

I have somehow managed to finagle myself into a sweet situation: every issue I get to go out on a date with a beautiful girl and stick my boss with the tab. It's a cool gig, but there are some ground rules:

1) I have to take a NEW girl every time – no duplicates (even if I fall in love).

2) My rendezvous must give our readers creative, informative and inspirational dating ideas that can be easily replicated.

3) I can't run the tab up too much (yeah right;) Through extensive research I set myself up for awesome adventures. My ultimate goal is for you to duplicate my ideas when you are looking to add a little zing and romance to your relationship. We are in this together!

Just when I thought I couldn't possibly top my last article, I somehow managed to do it. I reached deep down into my bag of tricks to come up with what I think will go down in the HQ history books as the coolest date of all time.

Now, before I reveal my super plan, I would like to introduce my accomplice for the evening. Rachael, these are the HQ readers, HQ readers this is Rachael Robbins. Now that the formalities are out of the way, allow me to tell you a little bit about this buxom beauty. Rachael does a little bit of everything, from starring in movies to posing in *Playboy*. Her resume also boasts stand-up comedy, pin up modeling, singing, burlesque performances and even horseback riding. You can check her out at www.rachaelrobbins.com.

So here is our outline for the evening:

Trapeze Swinging – a thrilling upside-down swinging experience on a rooftop apparatus overlooking the Hudson River.

Dinner at Desnuda – a completely unpredictable dining experience featuring food prepared in front of you with blowtorches and homemade gravity bong.

We meet up outside of Pier 40 off the West Side Highway; watching Rachael strut down the block, it's easy to tell that she is a star. It's like watching the sea part as the pedestrians step out of her way and just gawk in amazement at her shapely figure.

We immediately sign in and get to work with James, our friendly flying instructor. He gives us a quick 20-minute crash course on the dos and don'ts of this aerial art form. After a few warm ups on the ground level practice swing, we are instantly thrown into action.

Of course, being a gentleman, I allow Rachael to go first. Watching her scale the massive ladder and plunge from the platform leaves me with a knot the size of Texas in my stomach. Somehow though Rachael makes it look easy, and her smooth landing gives me just the confidence boost I need.

As I ascend this endless ladder, my heart pounds faster and faster, my palms begin to sweat and I can even feel my eyeballs pulsating. My first step onto the scaffold, well that is a doozy all right! Just standing all the way up there with the wind blowing in my face is quite an overwhelming experience.

As if the 30-foot tall trapeze thingamajig isn't high enough off the ground, you are actually a lot higher than you realize, because the trapeze school actually sits on the **rooftop** of Pier 40. And the view, well the view is just down right sick. To my right is a drop dead gorgeous scene of the sun setting over the Hudson River, and to my left is the chaos of cars zooming up & down the West Side Highway.

Every natural impulse in my body tells me to stay away from the edge of the platform, but with a little coaxing from my spotter, I muster up the courage to do so.



A swinging good time.

Arms out, knees bent, one deep breath and bam, ready or not here I come! Flying through the air while descending at a ridiculous rate, I can't help but feel like a kid again. Back & forth I go with the grace of a gorilla.

"Knees up!" the spotter yells. I do it.

"Hook 'em over the bar!" I do it again.

"Now let go of the bar with your hands!" My brain screams no but my body doesn't listen. I let go and find myself gliding upside down hanging on with only my legs. This is absolutely absurd but I love every second of it!

I grab back on to the bar, pull my legs back down and let go. Falling back, gravity does its thing, and I gently sink into the soft net. Wow, I did it!

Upon landing, I am overcome with adrenaline and elation. My face actually hurts from smiling so much. I had no idea what an extraordinary experience this was going to be. I am now completely addicted and can't wait to go back up.

For the next two hours Rachael & I scurry up and down the apparatus trying new tricks every time; we explore everything from back flips to mid-air catches. (Yes, another swinger literally catches you as you swing from one bar to another.) The cool thing about this class is that just about anyone can do it regardless of age (no one under 6) and athletic ability. I can guarantee it will rank right up there as one of the most thrilling experiences of your lifetime.

Now that we have worked up our appetites, it's time to go gorge on some ceviche.

Located in the East Village is a diamond in the rough of a restaurant that goes by the name of Desnuda. It's a small, stylish space that packs a powerful South American punch.

Rachael and I walk into this itty-bitty establishment and grab a seat at the bar. You see there are no tables at Desnuda, or a kitchen for that matter. Your bartender doubles as your chef and prepares everything right there in front of you.

We are quickly greeted by our host/proprietor/culinary artist/beverage designer Peter Gevrekis, who tells us the offerings for the evening. Oh, did I forget to mention that there is no menu and that you are basically at the mercy of whatever the staff decided to pick up that day?

We take our chef's suggestion and order up a plethora of small plates. Now here is where things start to get interesting. Peter pulls out a home-made gravity bong from under the bar, packs the glass bowl full of lap sang tea leaves & Sichuan peppercorns, then whips out a blow torch and singes the bowl. Next, he proceeds to catch the smoke in a shot glass and places it upside down over our raw oysters.

Now for the fun part. Gevrekis instructs us to pick up the shot glass, inhale the fumes, raise the oyster to our mouths and gulp it down. Wow, talk about creative spins and culinary concoctions.

He calls what he does "ghetto molecular gastronomy" but I think he is more like a modern day "Doc Brown" with a blow torch & brain full of yummy brilliance.

The happy hipster crowd here is a testament to the quality of food & gracious service. Every dish Peter prepares is precise & intense. Rachael describes the Peruvian style yellow fin tuna tartare as a "wild explosion of bold flavors".

My favorite is the "ceviche de vieras": sea scallops seared to perfection in a heavenly soy citrus glaze. This dish will make your taste buds moon-walk all over your tongue.

There is a ton of creative muscle, zest & cleverness put into everything our culinarian touches. When you dine at Desnuda you experience so much more than a meal, you experience inspirational eating at its finest. This joint is going to blow you out of the water. Just make sure to bring your appetite and imagination with you.

Desnuda
122 East 7th street
(between First Ave & Ave A)
NY NY 10009
(212) 254-3515
www.desnudany.com

N Y Trapeze School
Indoor facility - is in the tent on West 30th St
(between 10th & 11th Ave),
Outdoor Facility - In Hudson River Park (West
St at Houston St on top of Pier 40).
(212) 242-TSNY
www.newyork.trapezeschool.com