**This Document:**

These recommendations were taken from the WWME Planning and Information Guide revised in February 2004 and modified for the UMMEEE website in August of 2015.

This document is meant as a guideline and you are encouraged to “localize” it as needed. It is available as a Word document so that you can make the necessary changes and additions to the letters, talks and charts, that fit your local event planning.

**Overview:**

The purpose of a Romantic Dinner is to provide the atmosphere and opportunity for couples attending to reminisce about their dating days and early marriage. We are giving them a taste of what they recapture for their relationships now – by attending a Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend.

This event can successfully be held in a church facility that has a full service kitchen or a school cafeteria. The space can easily be transformed into a romantic “café” with some simple decorations.

Each couple should be seated at their own private card table (complete with table cloth, flower and candle light). Wait-couples can be couples from the Encountered Community. Each wait-couple should be assigned to no more than three (3) tables so they can provide excellent service. (The wait-couples should always attend to their assigned tables as a couple.)

If the room is equipped with 6- or 8-foot long tables, use them to create an intimate space. Fold in one of the table legs and stand it up using the remaining leg outstretched leg as it’s ground support. You can create a wall by putting these “on end” tables side-by-side, thereby transforming a large room into a small and cozy café. String Christmas white lights along the tops of the upright tables and you’ll be amazed at the effect combined with your elegantly decorated card tables.

The results from hosting Romantic Dinners in this format are remarkable. Couples attending this style of Romantic Dinner sign up at a rate of 90% or higher – and usually on the night of the dinner. It is important that you make the Inviting Presentation at the end of the evening to “close the deal.”

**Wait-Couples Duties (**wear white shirts, ties, black pants, skirts or dresses**)**

• Seat their couple(s) at a private table after all the couples have arrived

• Take their drink order

• Deliver drinks, appetizers and the first set of questions, explaining to the couples that they will receive new questions to discuss with every course.

• Clear appetizer plates, take salad dressing order and check on beverages – ask if they find the questions interesting, if enjoying themselves, etc.

• Deliver salads and next set of questions

• Clear salad plates and take entrée order (meat or vegetarian) and check on beverages

• Deliver entrée and next set of questions

• Clear entrée plates, take dessert order and check on beverages

• Deliver dessert and last set of questions

• Clear dessert plates and check on beverages

• Deliver a brochure and/or registration form to the table before presentation begins

**Registration Fee:**

If you are inviting couples via church bulletins as opposed to ME couples inviting their friends/relatives, you may want to consider a small registration fee ($10.00 or so) to limit no shows and to help make the registration process a little easier. Couples paying their fee confirms their reservation and reduces the number of calls the registration couple makes to confirm. If you wish, you can apply that fee to their Weekend application fee. Please note, charging a fee will affect the wording in your bulletin announcement.

**Reimbursement:**

WWME encourages the participating ME couples to donate what they can toward the funding of the Romantic Dinner. However, if reimbursement is anticipated, please estimate the reimbursement amount ahead of the event and seek approval from the Local Area Board.

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**To-Do Planning Chart:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TASK** | **COUPLE ASSIGNED** |
| Find a Flame or Encounter Community members willing to take this on. |  |
| Set a Date |  |
| Find a Venue (churches are a great choice) |  |
| Bulletin Letter to Pastor (if using this) |  |
| Invitation List Collector (collects names and addresses of invitees) |  |
| Invitation Printing & Mailing or Emailing to Couples |  |
| Dinner Handouts Printing |  |
| Table Place Cards Printing (optional but nice) |  |
| RSVP “Registration Couple |  |
| Kitchen Coordinator |  |
| Childcare Coordinator (check w/ venue on options there, see if Encountered couples’ older children will volunteer to babysit) |  |
| Menu Items & Cooks Assignments (see menu planning chart) |  |
| Wait-Couples (wear white shirts, ties, black pants, skirts or dresses) |  |
| Maitre D’ Couple (will host the evening) |  |
| Inviting Talk Presenter/s |  |
| Set Up - Decorating | Everyone |
| Clean Up | Everyone |
| CD Player |  |
| Romantic CD |  |
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**Menu Planning and Assignment Chart:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **ITEM** | **ASSIGNMENT** |
| Appetizer |  |
| Entree |  |
| Starch |  |
| Vegetable |  |
| Salad & Dressings |  |
| Bread |  |
| Dessert (ice cream Sundays for 2 in one bowl are fun and economical) |  |
| Wine |  |
| Iced Tea & Sliced Lemons |  |
| Milk |  |
| Drinking Water |  |
| Coffee |  |
| Andes After Dinner Mints (to be served with “bills” |  |
| Butter or Butter Pats (available at “club” stores) |  |
| Sugar, Equal Creamer Packets |  |
| Salt & Pepper Packets or Shakers |  |
| Children’s meal and drinks |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

**You can prepare enough food for the workers to eat after the dinner (when the guests have gone) or order pizza for delivery after Set Up (before the guests arrive) or after the dinner is over. Suggest paper plates for workers (minimizes clean up.)**

Suggested Couples Menu (we purchased much of this at Sam’s or Costco):

Punch served to couples as they arrive and wait to be seated at tables

Beverage – water, milk, ice tea, possibly wine (when asking for drink preference, ask for their dressing choice and entrée choice, let kitchen help know.)

Appetizer – cheese and crackers

Salad – lettuce salad, a couple of dressing choices

Entrée – lasagna (meat and vegetarian available), breadsticks, some vegetable

Dessert – Variety-pack cheesecake or Sundae for two in one bowl

Suggested Childrens’ Menu (we purchased much of this at Sam’s or Costco):

Pizza and juice boxes, carrots, cookies

**Romantic Dinner Schedule & Assignments:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **TIME** | **TASK** | **ASSIGNMENT** |
|  | Set Up (decorate, setup card tables, prepare childcare area) | Everyone |
|  | Kitchen Coordinator |  |
|  | Begin Cooking Entree |  |
|  | Begin Cooking Vegetables |  |
|  | Salad Prep |  |
|  | Light Candles and Play Music All Evening |  |
|  | Couple Arrival Time |  |
|  | Welcome Couples | Maitre D Couple |
|  | Greet and Seat Couples at private table | Wait-couples |
|  | Begin Beverage Service | Wait-couples |
|  | Start Coffee |  |
|  | Warm Bread |  |
|  | Prayer before Meal (Both husband and wife saying part of the prayer so couples see ME couples always acting as a pair.) | Maitre D Couple |
|  | Deliver Appetizer & questions (explaining that they will receive new questions to discuss with each course) | Wait-couples |
|  | Deliver Salad & questions – check on drinks,ask if they have questions, if enjoying themselves, etc***.*** | Wait-couples |
|  | Deliver Main Dish & questions – check on drinks | Wait-couples |
|  | Deliver Dessert & Coffee & questions – check on drinks | Wait-couples |
|  | Clear Tables and refresh drinks | Wait-couples |
|  | “Bill” Delivery with Pens | Wait-couples |
|  | Introduce presenting couple/s | Maitre D Couple |
|  | Give Inviting Talk |  |
|  | Ask if there are questions | Maitre D Couple |
|  | Explain how to apply for a Weekend | Maitre D Couple |

**Local Area Inventory and Assignment Chart**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ITEM** | **# IN INVENTORY** | **#**  **NEEDED** | **COUPLE**  **ASSIGNED** |
| China |  |  |  |
| Flatware |  |  |  |
| Water Glasses |  |  |  |
| Wine Glasses |  |  |  |
| Wine Carafes |  |  |  |
| Tea/Water Pitchers |  |  |  |
| Coffee Maker |  |  |  |
| Bread Baskets |  |  |  |
| Serving Utensils |  |  |  |
| Card Tables - rent what you can’t get from ME couples and friends |  |  |  |
| Tablecloths |  |  |  |
| Napkins |  |  |  |
| Floor Lamps if candles aren’t enough light and there’s no low-light option |  |  |  |
| “Bill” Folders (optional) |  |  |  |
| ME Pens |  |  |  |
| Flower Vases |  |  |  |
| Silk or Real Flowers |  |  |  |
| Glass Votive Cups |  |  |  |
| Tea Light Candles or lights |  |  |  |
| White Lights Strings |  |  |  |
| Extension Cords |  |  |  |
| Romantic Music |  |  |  |
| CD Player |  |  |  |
| TV & VCR or Projector & PC (if showing video) |  |  |  |
| Inviting Display Boards |  |  |  |
| Heart Confetti |  |  |  |
| Dishwashing Soap (if not at venue) |  |  |  |
| Sponges (if not at venue) |  |  |  |
| Dish Towels (if not at venue) |  |  |  |
| Podium for Maitre D & Inviting Talk (most churches have this) |  |  |  |

**Possible Romantic Dinner Invitation Wording**

Please join us for a

Night of Romance

and Italian cuisine (list your cuisine)

(Day of week, Month, Date, Year)

at (time) o ‘clock in the evening

at the (name of church/venue)

(street address, city, state)

Following the meal, we would like to briefly

talk with you about Marriage Encounter.

Please RSVP

by (date)

to (contanct name and phone/email)

Childcare will be provided upon request.

**Romantic Dinner Inviting Talk**

**Overview**

The purpose of the talk given at the end of a Romantic Dinner is to very briefly testify to the effect of the weekend on you personally, your relationship (romance and joy) and your family.

Romantic Dinners are highly successful – usually 90% and higher sign up at the dinner. Don’t be afraid to “close the deal.” The attendees will want to know how “to get” what their wait-couples have. We know we “got it” from the experience of our weekends – share that passion with them.

**Romantic Dinner Inviting Talk Outline**

This should be brief talk about the WWME weekend, its impact on the presenters’ lives and family and end with a specific and clear invitation to sign up now for one of the upcoming weekends!

1. Intro

Couple introduces them selves, including number of years married, number of children, Church and date of original WWME weekend.

1. Thank the couples for caring enough about their relationship to join us tonight.
2. Point out that tonight’s dinner was prepared and served by WWME couples that believe strongly in the value and role of Marriage in our world & Church today. Thank the group for helping.
3. Suggest to the couples that tonight’s couple time and table reflections and discussion is a sample of what happens on a WWME weekend.
4. Weekend designed for couples with good Marriages who want to make them better. “Preventative maintenance.”
5. Escape from the pressures of life, work, finances, and kids and spend a weekend focused on each other and your relationship.
6. Private experience – no group sharing.
7. Format of weekend: Presentation, reflection and sharing in privacy of your room.
8. Registration Fee and Free Will Donation on Sunday afternoon.
9. Impacts of weekend on your couple relationship and family. Presenters briefly share impact of their weekend on their lives. Consider: improved communication, rekindled romance, improved communication with children, teenagers etc.
10. Your Servers will now present your “Bill” for tonight’s Dinner: A registration Form for an upcoming weekend along with schedule of dates & locations.
11. Close by reminding the couples that the definition, value and importance of “Marriage” is being debated in our courtrooms, legislative bodies and newspapers, but God’s definition and Plan for our Covenant of Marriage has not changed. God wants us to be intimate and responsible in our relationships and uses our love to demonstrate to the world how He loves the Church. The World, our Church and their families need you to be the best couple you can be. Please accept our invitation tonight and sign up for an upcoming weekend. You won’t be disappointed! You deserve it!

**Letter to the Minister Announcements (add info about registration fee, if there will be one)**

Date

Dear Pastor/Reverend «MinisterName»,

In an effort to invite and register couples for the upcoming (*Weekend Date*) United Methodist Marriage Encounter in (*Location*), the Marriage Encounter community is hosting a free Romantic Dinner to married couples from your church. We would like to ask if you would please place the below listed announcement in your church bulletins and/or slides each weekend from now until (Date) if possible.

We appreciate all the assistance you have given us in placing announcements in your bulletins. Marriage Encounter relies greatly on couples that receive information published about upcoming Weekends from their church announcements.

Sincerely,

*Name* ♥ *Name Last Name*

WWME (*Local area name)* Area Coordinators

*(Address)*

*(City, State, Zip)*

*(Phone)*

*(Email)*

**Bulletin and Slide Announcements (add info about registration fee, if there will be one)**

**To be placed in (*Date – Date)* Church Bulletins**

Attention all Married Couples!! You are invited to a **Free Romantic Dinner** on (*Date)* at (*time)* p.m. at (Name of church or venue and location), sponsored by United Methodist Marriage Encounter. Come enjoy a quiet, romantic dinner for two, and find out what a Marriage Encounter Weekend is all about. To make your dinner reservation call (*Name* & *Name* at *Number).* Please make your reservation today, as the Romantic Dinner is open to the first 20 married couples who register.

**To be placed in (*Date – Date)* Church Slides**

Attention All Married Couples!!

You are invited to a **Free Romantic Dinner**

(*Date)*

(*time)* p.m.

at (Name of church or venue and location)

Sponsored by United Methodist Marriage Encounter.

Call (Name & Name at Number) to make your reservation.

**ROMANTIC DINNER HANDOUTS:**

We suggest that you print the handouts on a different color for each course.

**Deliver a set of questions to each couples’ table with the appetizers:**

Some questions to discuss as you enjoy your appetizer:

*Do you remember the first day you met?*

*How did you meet?*

*How did you feel inside?*

*What do you remember about your first date?*

*What was it like?*

*Do you remember your first kiss?*

*Do you remember where you were?*

*How did you feel?*

Are there ways you can create more of an “appetite” for your relationship today?

Some questions to discuss as you enjoy your appetizer:

*Do you remember the first day you met?*

*How did you meet?*

*How did you feel inside?*

*What do you remember about your first date?*

*What was it like?*

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*What was it like?*

*Do you remember your first kiss?*

*Do you remember where you were?*

*How did you feel?*

*Are there ways you can create more of an “appetite” for your relationship today?*

**Deliver a set of questions to each couples’ table with the salad**:

***Some questions to discuss as you enjoy your salad:***

*Do you remember sharing your dreams for life with each other?*

*And how you wanted to live?*

*Talk about those dreams and schemes you both had.*

*Do you remember the day you became engaged?*

*What was it like?*

*What was special about this person you fell in love with?*

*Are you allowing your relationship to “vegetate”?*

*What can you do to add “flavor” to your relationship?*

***Some questions to discuss as you enjoy your salad:***

*Do you remember sharing your dreams for life with each other?*

*And how you wanted to live?*

*Talk about those dreams and schemes you both had.*

*Do you remember the day you became engaged?*

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*What was it like?*

*What was special about this person you fell in love with?*

*Are you allowing your relationship to “vegetate”?*

*What can you do to add “flavor” to your relationship?*

**Deliver a set of questions to each couples’ table with the entree:**

***Some questions to discuss as you enjoy your entree:***

*Do you remember your wedding day?*

*And how she was the most beautiful woman in the world?*

*And how perfect and handsome he was?*

*Where was your first apartment, house, etc.?*

*How did you find it?*

*Do you remember your first argument as husband and wife?*

*Do you remember the sweet joy of making up as you held each other in your arms?*

*What is your most treasured memory about your life together? Share your memories with each other.*

*Which times would you most like to relive because they were the “best of times”?*

*Which times would you most like to relive in order to make different decisions because they were the “worst of times”?*

*Is romance still your “main dish”?*

*What do I think are the most important things to strengthen our love?*

***Some questions to discuss as you enjoy your entree:***

*Do you remember your wedding day?*

*And how she was the most beautiful woman in the world?*

*And how perfect and handsome he was?*

*Where was your first apartment, house, etc.?*

*How did you find it?*

*Do you remember your first argument as husband and wife?*

*Do you remember the sweet joy of making up as you held each other in your arms?*

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*Which times would you most like to relive because they were the “best of times”?*

*Which times would you most like to relive in order to make different decisions because they were the “worst of times”?*

*Is romance still your “main dish”?*

**Deliver a set of questions to each couples’ table with the dessert:**

***Some questions to discuss as you enjoy your dessert:***

*Since getting married, what have you done that is special to romance each other?*

*How does that compare to your dating years?*

*Do you remember any of the little gifts you have given or received for no reason at all?*

*How did you feel about that?*

*What special things would you like to plan for the near future for each other?*

*If you could have three wishes for your love, what would they be?*

*What’s the “sweetest” thing about finding time to be alone together?*

*Have you enjoyed your romantic evening so far? Did you enjoy the sort of sharing you’ve done this evening?*

***Some questions to discuss as you enjoy your dessert:***

*Since getting married, what have you done that is special to romance each other?*

*How does that compare to your dating years?*

*Do you remember any of the little gifts you have given or received for no reason at all?*

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