

Men's ebook

a lot of what you fancy...

HAPPY EASTER!

Bunnies and bold brights, spring shoes and chickens in the kitchen...

First Dates'
Fred Sirieix

French fancy

'Love, romance, heartbreak, hurt – c'est la vie.
Life is wonderful and I don't want to waste mine'

'I have a long nose and a funny-shaped potato head'

There's nothing like watching people find love to warm the cockles of your heart. Which is why *First Dates* – essentially watching strangers go on, you guessed it, first dates – has taken the nation by storm. A lot of it is thanks to a handsome French Maitre d' named Fred Sirieix, who offers up his restaurant to a sea of nervous, oh-so-cute romance seekers every week.

Now in its sixth series (with many success stories and even a proposal under its belt), Fred has become a bit of a love guru. Offering words of support and wisdom as well as a bit of eye candy, the nation swoons over the dad of two (Andrea, 11, and Lucien, six), who is, unfortunately ladies, happily settled with long-term partner, Alex.

First Dates is filmed at Paternoster Chophouse, St Paul's, but we meet a suited and booted Fred at his other fancy restaurant, Galvin at Windows in central London. We sort of expect to be wined, dined and whipped up into a gooey frenzy, but Fred leaves us a tad flat at first. Slightly abrupt, he checks his watch and dodges questions, but once his peppermint tea warmed him up (delivered without request by a very smart-looking waiter), he warms to us too. He makes us laugh, insists we come back for fizz on the house and even gives us some reading material for the way home. It's poetry. In Japanese. He makes us promise we'll read it. We *obviously* do.

We leave having seen both sides of Fred. One, the savvy businessman, just persevering with his newfound fame. The other, a hopeless romantic who, even though he'd hate to admit it, is a bit of a showman and likes the attention. So, with plenty of 'C'est la vie', welcome to the philosophical and slightly bizarre ramblings, of Mr Fred Sirieix...

Au contraire, *First Dates*' Maitre d' **Fred Sirieix**, 43, is bearded and *charmant*. He talked to us about wining, dining and er, dying...

You're very wise on the telly, Fred...

Well I read a lot and think about things. I am on a never-ending quest for knowledge and to be the best person I can be.

We imagine you're a very romantic boyfriend...

It's the little things that make a relationship romantic.

What sorts of things do you do?

I buy flowers. I send a nice text in the morning. I like Shakespeare's Sonnet 116. It's about loyalty and trust. It's about living in the now. So for me, knowing that love is present helps me to be romantic. As long as you live in the same reality it's good.

What would be your perfect date?

Oh my God, really?

Yes please!

It's like Christmas or a birthday. It's all about the anticipation. It could be a holiday for a date.

A holiday?!

Well, or just cooking a steak and sharing some chips and a bottle of wine. Both are great.

Would you bring your date a gift?

I love chocolates and teddies and things. People actually *need* to buy chocolate. They need to drink champagne and eat loads of butter too because it's so good for you.

Is it?

Yes! I eat butter and look at me.

How do you stay in shape?

The second I wake up I do 300 push-ups. So I've finished that five minutes after waking up. Then I wake up the children, take them to school, then I cycle or run to work. I also do 30 minutes boxing in the afternoon. A healthy mind is important.

And you'll be ready if a topless shoot comes along...

Yes of course! Why not?

Would you go fully nude?

Sure, *c'est la vie!* What's going to happen if I do it? Nothing. You might see a Fred calendar one day.

How would you rate your looks?

I'm a six. That's fair isn't it?

Quite modest for you, Fred.

I have a long nose, a funny-shaped potato head. I'm a six. David Gandy is a 10! I give myself one above average so that's all right.

What does a woman have to do to steal your heart?

It's not through one solid thing. Not just food, not just sex, you can't just have conversation or a shared interest. It has to be a complete package. You have to be able to evolve the connection.



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← **What do you mean by that?**

(Sighs) Look, you're on the continuum. You need to be able to evolve and change. Like the dinosaurs didn't evolve and they died. The only one that evolved and survived was the crocodile.

So the way to your heart is to live like a crocodile?

Well if you're not prepared to evolve then there is no point. Changing is part of life, we all do it. You have to keep it going and do what it takes.

Do your French roots help when finding love?

(Scrunches up nose) Not at all. A person is a person and human nature is universal. Yes there are cultural differences but largely people want the same thing. I'm confident and like who I am, but I've still been hurt many times in the past with love and I'll probably be hurt again. But *c'est la vie*.

How do you get over heartbreak?

It passes.

You must have some tips?

It feels like your life is ending, but deep down we know it will pass. When anything is gone, it's gone. If someone doesn't love you any more, what can you do about it? Move on and get over it.

So not even one day crying into a tub of ice cream is allowed?

No. You can't have love without loss. If you're not prepared to take loss and hurt then don't take love in the first place.



Above, left: Beardless at a charity boxing match (he likes to stay in shape, you know) with Marcus Wareing



Fred talks firsts...

Where was your first ever date? A little French restaurant I used to work at. I was 18 and she was 20. Oh my God, I was so in love with her.
When did you first have your heart broken? She was my first heartbreak! I was crying on my dad's shoulder when it finished. He was patting

my head telling me not to worry. It only lasted two months!
First kiss? I was 10. We were on a school camp, horse riding. We were holding hands too. It was very nice.
First crush? Kim Wilde. She's still got it. I listen to *Kids In America* every day.

OK. Well we hear you write poetry. Do you write for others or for yourself?

I have many muses in my life. They're not always women. I write poetry for the chairman of my company... I trust him. We have a great relationship. Bromance at its best!

Do you have any regrets in love?

No, it made me who I am. I have to be positive and make the most of things. Because tomorrow we could be dead. It won't be long, you know.

Well, it might not be immediate...

But yesterday I was 16. Now I'm 43! I can't believe I'm old. I have wrinkles and I'm grey, my son started sobbing saying he didn't want to be old like me because he was scared of my white beard! He's only six.

Do you embrace getting older?

Yes. I don't use any creams... All I use is a beard oil to condition my facial hair. But the other day I went to the doctor and he said I was as fit as a 23-year-old footballer. I feel like I'm 23 too, but, in reality, I am old. (Looks upset).

It's OK, you look great...

Yes, I'm OK. I'm just very conscious of the reality of my own death. My son asked when his birthday was, it's two months away and he said it was too long. The concept of time is so different when you are older. The less I sleep and the more I do, the better it is. I know I'm going to die.

Let's bring this back up...

Sorry, sorry.

What else do you hope to achieve before you, er, die?

Well I don't have a list. I don't know what could be around the corner, but I have to be doing something. Always.

What would you do if you were stuck on a desert island then?

Set up an ice cream stall. I could be happy selling ice creams.

To who?

To someone. There's always something to do. Even if I'm at home, I'll find something to do. We need to cram in as much as we can. Life is wonderful and I don't intend on wasting mine.

Words: Emma Jones. Pictures: London News Pictures

NB: *First Dates* is on C4, Tuesdays, 10pm