

Single on the dating circuit

If you're tired of trying to meet someone the usual way, here are a few new ideas to give your dating life an updated boost.

By Elisa Birnbaum

New ways to meet Mr. Right



You've tried it all: lavalife, singles parties, church socials, even your grandmother's cousin who claims she's the best matchmaker this side of the St. Lawrence. So you've resolved to give up dating for good. No more annoying profiles to fill out, no more embarrassing pictures to download, no more creepy men to fend off or pricey membership fees. But before you put away that adorable dating outfit for good, take heed: There are other options.

If you're still a fan of online dating but tired of the traditional offerings, you can try relatively new fish in the sea, Plentyoffish.com. Started in 2003 by young entrepreneur, Markus Frind -- who still operates the service single-handedly from his Vancouver apartment -- the site's biggest selling point lies in its subscription fees: there are none. Just sign-up, create a simple profile and you're literally free to browse one of the most popular dating sites in Canada today, with 250,000 to 320,000 users logging in daily. Other bonus

features, unique to the online dating world, include behavioral matchmaking and the ability to block messages from whole groups of people. So, say goodbye to "HotPants", the 60-year-old husband and father of two with a seemingly tireless libido.

Interested in some active socializing? How about Meet Market Adventures? Priding itself on being the antithesis of a dating service, the company organizes singles events and trips to satisfy all interests. Whether you want to cycle Ireland's Burren region, get jiggy with it on a ballroom dancing cruise, or enjoy a leisurely Saturday afternoon on a Beer Tasting Tour, you can join over 55,000 energetic singles looking for the same. What's so enticing about this service is that its focus on travel and having fun makes the process of meeting someone feel less pressured and contrived. Plus, the pay-as-you-go structure means no membership fees, a definite bonus for those who feel their pockets are as empty as their social calendars.

If you'd prefer help in your search and have money to burn, turn to It's Just Lunch. The service opened its matchmaking doors in 1991 and has already grown to 85 locations worldwide, 30,000 members and 50,000 organized dates per month. Your IJL journey begins with a confidential discussion of your likes, dislikes, varied interests -- and desire for a man who's a cross between Brad Pitt and George Clooney. Based on your detailed criteria, someone will sift through the roster -- computerized matchmaking is eschewed here -- and hand-select Mr. First Date. A lunch, post-work dinner or drinks will then be arranged. And don't fret if the first prospect is a no-go. The service, priced at approximately \$1,500, guarantees you 14 other first attempts at love. The beauty of this service lies not only in the hand-picking of mates but in the fact that everything is organized for you. All you have to do is show up, looking pretty, wearing those Jimmy Choos you chastised yourself for buying, claiming they were overpriced and squished your big toe. (But I digress.)

More great ways to meet new dates



Tired of cooking for one? Perhaps your culinary skills are to blame. Enter the Singles Supper Club. Offering cooking class parties for all tastes, it's the brainchild of chef Vanessa Yeung and event planner, Stephenie Summerhill, co-owners of Aphrodite Cooks. Signing up is as simple as searching through the website's calendar of events and choosing a class that suits your age group and sexual orientation. Each lesson begins with a cocktail, dinner and glass of wine, sure to whet your romantic and epicurean appetites. It ends with a newfound appreciation for the skillet and the chance for participants to socialize while digging into their joint gourmet creation. An opportunity to learn a new skill in an informal, fun atmosphere, makes these classes particularly favorable for the quiet or reserved single. Take one spoon cooking lesson, add a cupful of singles, mix well and serve up hot. Makes 2 servings.

If you believe chemistry can be determined in three minutes, check out 25dates.com. Started in 2002, Canada's Speed Dating Service makes cupid proud with its claim that over 75% of its participants succeed in finding at least one match. Here's how it works: First, go online, find your age group and sign up. Then, once at the event -- wearing a tag with your name and assigned number -- you'll chat one-on-one with up to 25 men for three-minute intervals. If one catches your eye, you'll mark down his number and, fingers and toes crossed, he'll do the same. When a match is mutual, **25dates.com** sends you each other's contact information, tied in a hope and a prayer. The service is an especially positive option if you're outgoing and good at first impressions. But, if you've had an off-night, don't worry: A matchless evening guarantees your next one's on the house.

[Close Window >](#)