



Putting a price on it all

**Samantha Healy
and Jorja Orreal**

THEY say “diamonds are a girl’s best friend” and “the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach”, but either one could put a major hole in your pocket this Valentine’s Day.

Valentine’s Day spending is expected to rise 2.7 per cent to more than \$867 million this year, after the tough love of the GFC in 2009, according to IBISWorld Australia.

The market researcher’s report found spending on romantic getaways was likely to increase most, with Australians to fork out \$398.7 million – up 3.7 per cent or \$14.2 million from 2009.

Spending at restaurants was also expected to grow 2.6 per cent (to \$29.8 million), and spending on jewellery was expected to rise 1.1 per cent (to \$33.4 million).

Flower sales were expected to increase 1.8 per cent (to \$45.6 million), but greeting card sales were expected to fall.

For Queenslanders looking for gifts to impress, there are a number of big-dollar selections available.

Brisbane’s most expensive engagement ring, special-order

only, was a 3.2 carat flawless diamond platinum ring for \$813,000 from Mont Blanc in QueensPlaza. Tiffany & Co in Brisbane also had a platinum engagement ring with a 0.9 carat emerald-cut pink diamond at just over \$300,000 for sale last week. Cartier at Surfers Paradise had a 1.6 carat solitaire diamond engagement ring for \$50,000.

For foodies, Absynthe Restaurant at Surfers Paradise has the state’s most expensive Valentine’s Day menu at \$225 per person. The five courses, with matching wines, by award-winning chef Meyjitte Boughenout, includes chicken breast wrapped in pancetta, pan fried barramundi, lobster bisque, champagne sorbet and chocolate fondant.

Celebrity chef Matt Moran’s Brisbane restaurant Aria has a three-course menu for \$135 per person. Mondo Organics at West End has a Valentine’s Day menu for \$125 per person, and Bar Barossa in Brisbane and Wilsons Boathouse at Portside both have menus for \$150 per couple.

For the more traditional, online florist Roses Only were selling 48 long-stemmed roses in a box from \$389.