

# INtake

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## The fast and the curious

Have a need for speed? Try enduring 15 dates in a mere two hours.

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"I'm going to kill you for making me do this."

It's 6:30 p.m. on a Wednesday as my friend Beth Belange and I pull into the parking lot at Blu Martini. Our nerves start bubbling as we park, unsure of the adventure we're about to embark upon -- the world record attempt for the largest simultaneous speed-dating event.

Cupid.com/PreDating holds a couple of events each month at restaurants and bars in different parts of the city, where professional singles of varying age ranges -- 23 to 33 and 34 to 44, or 21 to 27, 28 to 36 and 36 to 45 -- meet for up to 15 six-minute "pre-dates."

For this event, Belange and I were going to be two of those pre-dating young professionals.

And in the next two hours we'll have had 15 first dates.

### The scene

After reapplying some lip gloss, double-checking to make sure there's no food in between my teeth and that the mascara isn't running down my cheeks, we're ready to go.

We walk in to find about 40 well-dressed young professionals, many probably coming straight from work, eating sushi at the bar or lounging on one of the nearby milk white chairs.



**Pairing off:** Groups of singles mingle over drinks at the Cupid.com/PreDating event, a world record for the largest simultaneous speed-dating event. -- Tom Klubens / For INtake

### PreDating (speed dating)

- **Where:** 14 West, 14 W. Maryland St.
- **When:** 5:30 p.m. Feb. 28.
- **Where:** Vapour Lounge, 5252 E. 82nd St.
- **When:** 7 p.m. March 9.
- **How it works:** Sign up online, show up at the place, grab a drink and/or food and let the dates begin. You'll have up to 15 six-minute dates per event.
- **Cost:** \$35 to \$40.
- **Info:** www.pre-dating.com.



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I expect to see a disproportionate number of average or even below-average-looking people, but the crowd is surprisingly normal.

Still, it's a little nerve-racking to realize that by the end of the night you'll have talked with most of the people in the room.

"I'm going to kill you," Belange reminds me.

## The dates

I have to admit: I did expect this experience to be horrible. Visions of "The 40 Year Old Virgin" and "Hitch" kept popping into my head. Six minutes can be an extremely short -- or an extremely long -- amount of time.

I quickly find out that both are true.

Granted, having a photographer in tow is never a good way to make an impression on a potential date.

It seems to spook some guys, and while others are fine with it, flashing lights can be a bit distracting. The fact that I'm a reporter, while interesting to most, also freaks some guys out. I think they're afraid of being eternally humiliated in print.

A few dates did drag. Most of the time the bell rang just when things started to get good. But a couple conversations were like pulling teeth. And by about five dates in, things started to feel a little bit repetitive:

"So how's your night going?"

"What do you do?" (A couple of guys were computer programmer types, a couple were from Eli Lilly and one was a racecar engineer.)

Conversation is pretty organic, and since I talk to people for a living, I hope my skills are above-average.

The one unique question I remember is: "What's the last book you read that you didn't finish?" Unfortunately I can't remember who said it, but at least his question stuck out in my mind.

## The results

By the end of the night, with 15 dates and several martinis under our belts, Belange had shifted her phrase of choice from "I'm going to kill you" to "That was interesting."

The general consensus is that we both met quite a few guys who we'd love to hang out with again, but no one who we'd want to make out with.

We both think we hit it off pretty well with most of the men who've cycled through, but when the results come in the morning after the event, Beth has fared much better than I.

We both selected about five guys that we'd want to talk to again, and I get two matches back and one who picked me though I didn't pick him.

Size:

Just about everyone picked Beth. The one standout in both of our minds, which we both agreed would be great fun to hang out with again, picked neither of us. Go figure. At least she's dropped the death threats. And I'm alive to tell the tale.

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