

Don's Home News

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How Do North Americans Like Their Coffee? Not Crisp

With apologies to the iconic Coffee Crisp ad, we North Americans like our coffee in a cup. And we like it a lot.

It's estimated that last year we drank more than two servings of the (usually) caffeinated beverage a day. And while the health impact of coffee is subject to debate, current dietary guidelines support our coffee habit: we're allowed three to five cups a day. Providing it's without cream, milk, and/or sugar.

As noted in a *Huffington Post* article, one research study suggests that most actually do prefer to drink their coffee black. The study by ratings organization Zagat suggests that nearly half of males (42 percent) prefer black coffee. Women are less likely to drink it black – perhaps because they tend to opt for creamy coffee beverages. But those of both genders who haven't moved to the dark side prefer half-and-half to skim milk.

The health impact remains controversial, but the business aspect is undisputable. The Zagat study says people pay an average of \$3.28 for a coffee, and are willing to pay even more if a barista prepares it. Given a two-cup-a-workday habit that works out to at least \$6.56 a day; meaning we spend more than \$130 a month, weekends not included.

Interestingly, different countries have different brewing preferences. More than a third of Americans participating in a Houzz.com coffee consumption survey say they prefer drip coffee. Ironically, Germans don't, even though it was a German who invented the paper drip coffee filter; 26 percent of Germans love their espresso makers.

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Even the Tiniest Condo Can Feel Big: Read On...

As urban dwellers scramble for affordable living space, apartment sizes are generally shrinking. The prices, however, are not. In Manhattan, for example, 800 sq. ft. (74 sq.m) can easily eat up a million dollars.

Driven by this reality, residents of urban centers across North America are trying to squeeze into the smallest spaces they can to keep their downtown addresses. And they need to use their space creatively.

Designers are answering the call with mind-boggling space solutions. Here are a few that could make your 632 sq. ft. (56 sq. m) condo feel almost spacious:

- Movable walls – Sitting less than an inch off the ground, these are attached to runners on stationary walls. They can be moved around like furniture to create rooms at will. IKEA is currently testing them on Swedish families.
- Sliding pantry – This extremely narrow rack is on wheels or sliding tracks and fits into otherwise unused space, like the gap between your cabinets and refrigerator. Slide it out, grab a can, and push it back.
- Drawer stairs – Why waste all that space under the stairs? Efficient designers have converted each step into a drawer.
- Picture frame table – Your large wall hanging is no longer just art. It's also the dining room table. A hinge on the bottom allows you to pull the top away from the wall, making it parallel to the floor. Legs snap into place along the frame's sides and fold out to reach the floor. Voila...dinnertime!

Is Your Happy Relationship Just a Formula Away?

Come on, it's spring...time to drag your relationship out of dullsville.

How? You may want to take some ideas from writer Eve Fairbanks, who suggests the ultimate happy relationship is just a formula away. According to Fairbanks, writing in the Huffington Post: "Scientists believe they've discovered a simple formula for happy relationships."

In her article, she details the life, times, and research of John and Julie Gottman, a power pair of psychologists who have made the art and science of love the focus of their research for 20 years.

Having discovered John Gottman in an article called "Masters of Love" in The Atlantic, Fairbanks was initially skeptical: "...love had been harnessed in the laboratory, seen, understood and broken into building blocks we could all apply to our lives."

But as she researched his approach, she found that Gottman's ideas made sense. Love is "a habit of mind," Gottman believes. And it takes work.

Effectively, a forever relationship is built in layers and founded on friendship and admiration. Handling arguments constructively is a key element of a happy relationship. The research found that when partners who had a solid relationship argued, they still managed to take the high road, making five positive comments for every negative one.

Notes Fairbanks, "At the top – the pinnacle of a great relationship – came helping each other's dreams come true and building a shared sense of purpose."

And, as Fairbanks relates, when they work at it, many people have their dreams of a great relationship come true.

Quick Quiz

Each month I'll give you a new question.

Just email me at donzahnle@gmail.com for the answer.

Kale chips can be a nutritious substitute for what snack?

Thanks for All Your Referrals!

I succeed when people like you refer me to your friends, neighbors and loved ones. It's the best kind of feedback I can receive.

So thanks for continuing to pass this newsletter on to people you care about.

Are You Wondering How Much Your Home Is Worth?

Do you want to know how the price of your home has changed in today's market? Do you want to know for how much other homes in your neighborhood are selling? Stop looking at Zestimates and find out what your home is *really* worth.

If you're wondering what's happening to prices in your area, or you're thinking about selling your house, I can help.

Email me for [email](#) me for a no-obligation, professional evaluation.

I won't pressure you into listing with me or waste your time. [Read about how I feel about pressure!](#) I'll just give you the honest facts about your home and its value.

Email me at donzahnle@gmail.com with "send me a Home Value Analysis" in the Subject line. I also need the property address. I'll get the report out to you in 24 hours.

Worth Reading

How to Cultivate the Art of Serendipity

By Pagan Kennedy
The New York Times

Serendipitous events aren't always a matter of dumb luck. As Pagan Kennedy, author of a forthcoming book about how inventions happen, argues in this article, there's always been an element of skill in making meaningful discoveries: mainly, willingness to look for information in seemingly uninteresting places. Still, as Kennedy admits, efforts to organize serendipity will "always be a whimsical undertaking, given that the phenomenon is difficult to define, amazingly variable and hard to capture in data." **More:** <http://tinyurl.com/April-reads-1>

Reduce Your Stress by Making "Good Enough" Decisions

By Eric Ravenscraft
Lifehacker.com

Got a decision to make? As Eric Ravenscraft recommends: "Make a 'good enough' decision. Don't sweat making the absolute 100% best decision." We perfectionists may squirm uncomfortably, but sort-of-good decisions can make our lives easier. The stress of making the perfect decision plays havoc with our emotions, and no one deserves that. **More:** <http://tinyurl.com/April-reads-2>

8 Ways to Zero In on Your Decorating Style

By Laura Gaskill
Houzz.com

Gaskill approaches the issue of identifying your decorating style without those formal names and complicated terms. It's simple, she suggests: just spend some time thinking about what you love. Then look at your findings and put a creative name to your style. Her eight steps bring a breath of fresh air to the issue. **More:** <http://tinyurl.com/April-reads-3>

Online Estimates: Informative or Misleading?

Online real estate information sites are routinely used by homeowners, home buyers, real estate agents, and developers as gauges of a home's market value.

Some of these sites use automated valuation models (AVMs) to provide information on estimated market value, usually for homes currently on the market. The information is available on many home search websites across North America.

AVMs are often proprietary, but generally these use algorithmic calculations that take into account characteristics such as square footage of both home and property, number of bedrooms and bathrooms, footprint of the structure, and property tax

information and prior sales prices for nearby homes. The factors are weighted differently according to the specific geographical location.

Consumers often rely heavily on AVMs – sometimes too heavily. According to industry executives, some have median error rates of 8 percent. Of course, the accuracy of the information varies according to the individual website.

In fact, AVM error rates vary widely, and in some places they far exceed the national median. In large urban areas, as well as in desirable suburban and waterfront locales, AVM estimates may be off by tens of thousands of dollars in either direction. Sometimes online valuations are higher than actual on-the-ground selling prices, and sometimes

they are significantly lower.

There are several reasons why AVMs can be off. For one thing, an algorithm can't determine the actual physical condition of a residence. Sometimes homes have specific characteristics that add to or detract from value, such as a poorly located bathroom, a tiny bedroom, an unusual layout, or an obstructed view. Moreover, AVMs don't take into account title issues, such as concern over surveys or boundaries.

Many agree that AVMs can be a good place to start when you're in the research stage of house hunting. However, once you're in search mode, forewarned is forearmed: ask your real estate agent for more detailed comparatives.

Foodie Culture Goes 'Healthy-ish'

"Healthy-ish" diets are so "in" right now. What-ish diets, you ask? Well, imagine foods that taste good, are comforting, and are also – ready for it? – somewhat nutritious. These are healthy-ish foods, and the food industry is right on top of it – mixing our guilty pleasures with nutrition – like yogurt that tastes for all the world like cake.

"Healthy-ish" eating isn't really new. In her article in *The Atlantic*, Sophie Gilbert notes that we've seen it all before: "In fact, it's the food industry's equivalent of your mom telling you to finish your broccoli before you dive into the Twinkies."

But it's gone 21st century in a big way. Gilbert points to the January 2016 issue of foodie magazine *Bon Appétit*, "which is based almost entirely around the concept of 'healthy-ish' eating: 'delicious, comforting home cooking that just happens to be kinda good for you.'"

As *Bon Appétit*'s editor, Adam Rapoport, points out: "We indulge when the situation arises...and we try to eat smart other times...It's a food philosophy that's sensible, moderate, conservative, and sound..." And so "in."

This Month's Smile: Funny Food Faux Pas

Have you ever worried about using the wrong fork? Relax.

According to SeriousEats.com and CalorieCount.com, that pales compared to these examples:

In Russia on business, an associate was taken out for an elegant dinner. Offered a selection of meats, but not knowing any Russian, he simply pointed toward the lamb and cried, "Baaah!"

A newlywed hoped to impress her groom with Italian cooking. Unfortunately, in preparing her first lasagna, she didn't realize she should boil the noodles before baking.

A nine-year-old was proud of herself for making her own toast with fancy blueberry bread, until her mom told her they didn't have blueberry bread; those dark "blueberry" spots were mold.

Ask the Agent: This Month's Question

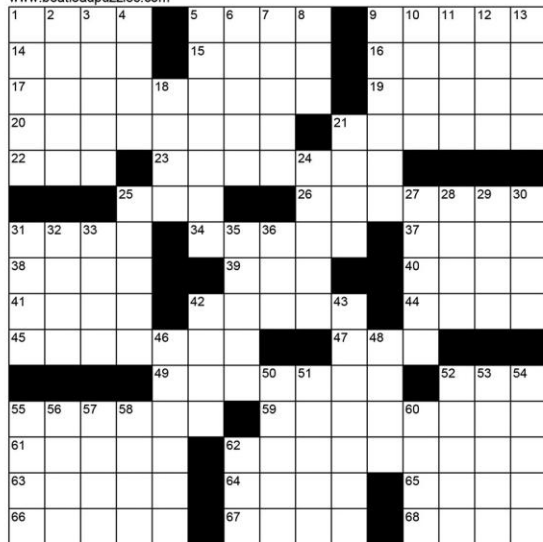
How do I decide on a selling price?

Finding that sweet spot between undervaluing and overvaluing your home can be difficult. As a homeowner, your personal attachment to your home, and the money you've put into it, can color your judgment. You need to price your home correctly by considering a variety of factors: the current local market prices of similar homes that have sold recently in your neighborhood; any upgrades; landscaping or condition issues; and proximity to schools, shopping, transit, and recreation.

It may be tempting to use online home evaluators for a quick quote. But in most cases, their data may not capture the full picture – such as whether the house needs extensive cosmetic upgrades – and error margins can often vary widely from city to city. So take their results with a grain of salt.

Real estate agents have years of experience, and great tools to help you set your price so that it accurately reflects all factors. Best of all, your agent will be more objective than you can be.

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ACROSS

- 1. Seafood choice
- 5. Use a tent
- 9. Divided
- 14. Possess
- 15. Territory
- 16. Tantalize
- 17. Having leaves year round
- 19. Artist's prop
- 20. Military rank
- 21. Pale color
- 22. Explosive initials
- 23. Gathered
- 25. Exist
- 26. Very hot pepper
- 31. Speed contest
- 34. Metric measure
- 40. Large barrel
- 41. Marco ____
- 42. Zealous
- 44. Periods in history
- 45. Type of paint
- 47. Get by
- 49. Driver's ____
- 52. Janitor's tool
- 55. Decipher
- 59. Able to read
- 61. Elude
- 62. Napoleon ____

DOWN

- 1. Trunk
- 2. Black bird
- 3. Ward off
- 4. Ice mass
- 5. Chewy candy
- 6. Sports stadium
- 7. Comes together
- 8. Cooking vessel
- 9. Constant
- 35. Singer ____ Hayes
- 36. Children's game
- 42. Buffalo's lake
- 43. Begin again
- 46. Firstborn
- 48. Hold on to
- 50. Secretly marry
- 51. Dressed to the ____
- 52. Diva ____ Callas
- 53. Water mammal
- 54. Looks intently
- 55. Actress ____ Moore
- 56. Uniform
- 57. Showed up
- 58. Fragrance
- 60. Grade
- 62. Vampire ____

- 10. Pod vegetables
- 11. Endure
- 12. Psychic's phrase (2 wds.)
- 13. Inform
- 18. Bicycle part
- 21. Fleshy fruit
- 24. Spectacle
- 25. Fable collector
- 27. Host
- 28. Adjacent
- 29. Space org.
- 30. Caribous' kin
- 31. Entranced
- 32. ____ vera
- 33. Serene
- 35. Singer ____ Hayes
- 36. Children's game
- 42. Buffalo's lake
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Recipe: Spring Shaved Asparagus Salad

Serves 4

To make this a light main dish, add shredded chicken, sliced steak, or marinated tofu.

- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon sherry vinegar
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon water
- 1 small shallot, finely minced
- 1 pound asparagus, woody ends snapped off
- 3 medium radishes
- 1/3 cup toasted, chopped pecans
- 1/4 cup crumbled Gorgonzola cheese

Directions

Whisk together the honey, olive oil, vinegar, mustard, water, and shallots in a medium bowl and season with salt and pepper. Set aside.

Once asparagus is trimmed and cleaned, use a vegetable peeler to shave off slices of the asparagus, working from the tip to the end of the stalk. Place in a serving bowl. Cut radishes in half then slice into half-moons and add to the bowl with asparagus. Toss with dressing and pecans and top with the cheese to serve.

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Thanks for reading! If you would like to tell me what you think about this newsletter, or if you're thinking of buying or selling real estate, please get in touch.

