

# Don's Home News

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## Maker Faires—An Old Idea Made New for a Tech World

Technology hasn't supplanted human creativity. Instead, it's helping. Maker Faires—combinations of farmers markets, craft shows, and science fairs—are promoting human creativity and blending elements of the past with today's technology.

Organizers have dubbed the Faires concept “the greatest show (and tell) on earth.” Vendors range from students to professional engineers and artists, and the reach is global. Already this year, Maker Faires have been held in Egypt, Puerto Rico, Spain, Sweden, and the Ukraine.

This fall, Berlin will host its first Faire. The concept was born when the creators of California-based *Make* magazine wanted to bring the tech-inspired DIY projects featured in the magazine's pages to the general public. *Make* cofounder Sherry Huss defined a “maker” as “anyone who has a passion for what they do and is willing to share it.”

While surely passionate, many of the items showcased in Maker Faires are somewhat eccentric: art installations created from masking tape, a printer that makes edible pancakes by reading digital files, and a 17-foot robotic giraffe that has visited the White House are a few examples. Handmade soap is made from materials used in making home brews, and a modern wedding dress is hand-crocheted, as it may have been for brides in the mid-1800s.

So, far from being antagonistic to 21st century technology, Makers Faires intertwine the past with the present to delight thousands of visitors around the world. Look for one near you.

## Did You Know?

Any real estate licensee can help you buy or sell a home, but only a REALTOR® keeps working to protect your investment long after the sale.

**Did you know?** Only REALTORS®, not licensees, are fighting right now to preserve the federal Mortgage Interest Deduction on first and second homes.

**Did you know?** Only REALTORS®, not licensees, fought to create a tax exemption on the first \$500,000 of capital gains from the sale of a principal residence.

**Did you know?** Only REALTORS®, not licensees, are the only line of defense against government legislation and taxation of your home.

## Boost Your Home's Look for Less: Try These \$500 Hacks

Itching for a home improvement project but low on cash? Not every project has to break the bank; there are plenty of jobs that will boost your home's appeal for under \$500. Here are a few ideas:

**Paint:** Paint your kitchen, paint the baseboards, paint your front door, and paint some furniture. It's amazing how a few coats of a new color (or a refreshing of the old one) can improve the overall look and feel of your home.

**Work in the yard:** You don't have to have the best garden on the street, but a well-maintained front yard plays a huge role in curb appeal. Trim trees, replace or repair fences and install a new mailbox. If you haven't touched your front walkway since moving in, consider a remodel.

**Get organized:** Most people have a place in their home that could benefit from a major reorganization. For messy closets, a DIY organization system can be installed individually or as a unit; big box stores have good selections at many price points.

**Replace hardware:** It's expensive to replace cupboards and cabinets, but swapping out hardware can make a big impact for little money. Switch up handles and drawer pulls for updated (or antique) hardware to give your kitchen or bathroom a new look.

**Replace your backsplash:** If you're handy, replacing your kitchen backsplash is fairly easy and instantly renews the look of the room. Tiles vary widely in price; know how much space you'll need to cover and price out the project before shopping to avoid overspending.

# Batteries—The Next Frontier for a Device-Focused Society

No matter what device you depend on—a flashlight, a smartphone, or a computer—it likely won't work without a battery. Yet the science behind batteries has been relatively underwhelming. Until now.

Much of the key development work on batteries dates back to the 1800s. And since then the lowly battery has powered our society in a relatively low-key way. Now, however, the battery needs to join the 21st century. And investors such as billionaire Warren Buffet are betting its time has come.

As Michael J. De La Merced noted in *The New York Times*, "By essentially agreeing to swap his firm's holdings in P&G, worth about \$4.7 billion, in exchange for Duracell, Mr. Buffett will gain one of the best-known battery companies in the world." Plus market share. While many claim Buffett's

purchase is a tax maneuver, others believe he sees big opportunities in today's \$50 billion global battery market. Batteries represent the new frontier. And Buffet is not alone in noticing.

Tesla, under CEO Elon Musk, recently launched the Powerwall home battery to revolutionize the way we use energy, envisioning a network of home batteries acting as power plants. The product, initially high-priced, will become more affordable and more desirable, Musk believes.

Meanwhile, Science Daily's Battery News regularly highlights new developments in batteries, ranging from "squishies" made from wood pulp to an ultrafast aluminum battery. These days it seems a lot of important players are charged up over batteries. And they're betting big.

## Quick Quiz

Each month I'll give you a new question.

Just email me at [donzahnle@gmail.com](mailto:donzahnle@gmail.com) for the answer.

What does Earth's name mean?

## Why Not Pass Me to a Friend?

If you've enjoyed this newsletter and found its information useful, please pass it to a neighbor, friend or co-worker.

And if you have any comments about it, don't forget to give me a call or send me an email!

## 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?

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

Either call 404-939-1309 or [email](mailto:donzahnle@gmail.com) 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.

I'll also give you the "inside scoop" on what's happening in the housing market near where you live!

Call me at 404-939-1309 or email me at [donzahnle@gmail.com](mailto:donzahnle@gmail.com) and we will arrange a time to get together.

## Worth Reading

### Can Money Buy Happiness? The Relationship Between Money and Well-Being

By: *The Society for Personality and Social Psychology*  
*Science Daily*

Having more money won't make you happier. But how you spend it may. Researchers have found people are happier when they purchase experiential items, like concert tickets or items for hosting a dinner party. Not so much when buying material goods. In fact, voluntarily sacrificing some material pleasures can increase happiness. Some of us, however, would like to give great wealth a shot. **More:**

<http://tinyurl.com/August-read1>

### Inside the Teenage Brain

*Interview with John Bruer*  
*PBS Frontline*

Author John Bruer discusses the myth that the first three years of a child's life are more important for brain development than other stages. Notes Bruer: "We've known ... that different parts of the brain mature or go through this explosive growth in connections at different points in development." Basically, the first-three-year theory doesn't go far enough; the teen brain may be equally important. Parents probably agree. **More:**

<http://tinyurl.com/August-read2>

### Why I Choose to Have Less Choice

By *Tim Lott*  
*The Guardian*

It's OK for something to be good enough. In fact, coming to grips with the fact that everything doesn't have to be "the best" may be better for us. Like shoppers panicked by burgeoning supermarket shelves, we are paralyzed by choice. To find freedom, we should reduce our options. **More:**

<http://tinyurl.com/August-read3>

# Home Solar Systems Make Dollars and Sense

Rooftop solar panels not only enhance a home's green credentials and reduce utility bills, they also make it more marketable and boost its resale value.

## Solar installations boost home values:

A recent study sponsored by the Department of Energy, and conducted by California-based Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBL), looked at sales data spanning eight states and nearly 23,000 homes from 2002 to 2013. The study found that home buyers were willing to pay as much as \$15,000 more for a home with an average size photovoltaic system of 3.6 kilowatts or 3,600 watts, than for a similar home without solar panels.

On the whole the study found that buyers were willing to pay more for

additional solar-generating power, and the larger the system, the larger the premium they would be willing to pay.

**And homes sell faster:** In active solar markets like New Jersey and California, returns on solar energy investment were higher than in places where the marketplace has not yet caught up with solar power. But regardless of the strength of the market, solar-powered homes enjoyed higher demand and shorter selling cycles than comparable non-solar homes. Interestingly, the LBL study found that homes with solar panels typically sold approximately 20% faster than homes without solar systems.

Considering that the cost of solar system installations has dropped

dramatically while solar storage capacity has increased and technology has improved, investment in residential solar energy seems to make both dollars and sense. Through 2016, homeowners and business owners can take advantage of the federal Investment Tax Credit for residential and commercial solar energy applications. Plus, many states offer incentives above and beyond the federal government's tax credit.

One final encouraging development regarding home solar installations: In December, Fannie Mae issued a guideline specifying that if a house has an owned solar system, appraisers should leverage the solar system into the appraisal.

## How to Spice Up Office or School Lunches

Packed lunches are often boring. So what's a better way to spice up office or school lunches than, well, a little spice?

Caroline Craig and Sophie Missing, authors of *The Little Book of Lunch*, write in *The Guardian*: "Our palates have become accustomed to spicy and exotic additions, and we expect the deep, often complex flavor that spices provide whatever meal we're eating." And that's especially true for drab, and sometimes rushed, lunchtime meals.

The authors' suggestions include harissa, a Tunisian hot chili pepper paste that goes on everything from veggies to chicken dishes. (Refer to the *Guardian* post at <http://tinyurl.com/Spicy-lunches> or check online for recipes.) You can also add spicy oils to noodle soup, or rub leftover chicken with cumin and moisten with mayo for a yummy sandwich. Try marinating any meat with spices, roasting, and wrapping in a pita with lettuce and tomato.

But one word of caution: be sure to use thermoses or cold packs to keep your spicy lunches well chilled. Hummus and olives should be kept cold as well. Let's face it: No one wants ptomaine poisoning—especially at lunch.

## This Month's Smile: Rainy Day Jokes

Kids love rainy day jokes. They're almost as much fun as jumping in puddles. These are courtesy of the Enchanted Learning website.

**What happens when it rains cats and dogs?**

You might step in a *poodle*.

**It's raining cats and dogs.**

Well, as long as it doesn't *rein-deer*.

**What did the lightning bolt say to the**

**other lightning bolt?**

You're shocking.

**What goes up when the rain comes down?**

An umbrella.

**Why did the woman open her purse outside?**

She expected *change* in the weather.

**What bow can't be tied?**

A *rainbow*.

## Ask the Agent: This Month's Question

**How do I start looking for a home?**

So you're about to take the plunge into homeownership. Once you've figured out you can buy a house and how to finance it, the next thing you need is a list of attributes you want in your dream home.

First do some research. Information is readily available at the click of a mouse. Establish what's most important to you: Where are you flexible and what can't you live without?

Next share your list with your real estate agent. For example, while you might want to restrict your search to one area, your agent's familiarity with your needs, plus an understanding of what's available on the market, may have you looking (successfully) outside your preferred location, where you can meet all your needs and get more for your money. The key is to keep an open mind and trust your agent's experience and expertise. Your perfect home may be closer than you know.

To search for listings online click [here](#)

[www.DonZahnle.com](http://www.DonZahnle.com)

						8		
3	5			9	8	4		
		6	3	4		1		7
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	9							

**Sudoku instructions:** Complete the 9 × 9 grid so that each row, each column and each of the nine 3 × 3 boxes contains the digits 1 through 9. Contact me for the solution!

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### Retro Recipe: Auntie Ruth's Ham Salad Loaf

Serves 4 to 6

1 tablespoon gelatin  
 ¼ cup cold water  
 2 cups minced cooked ham  
 ½ cup celery, chopped  
 ½ cup crushed soda crackers  
 1 pimento, chopped  
 1 green pepper, chopped  
 2 tablespoons onion, chopped  
 2 hard-boiled eggs  
 1 teaspoon lemon juice  
 ½ cup whipped-type dressing  
 Lemon slices and dill to garnish

#### Directions

Soak gelatin in cold water and dissolve in hot water.

Mix all remaining ingredients, adding dressing last. Stir in the gelatin and mix well.

Turn into a loaf pan lined with plastic wrap. Refrigerate until set.

Garnish with lemon slices and fresh dill.

