

February



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Gourmet Chocolate Strawberries

Ingredients

- 16 ounces milk chocolate chips
- 2 tablespoons shortening
- 1 pound fresh strawberries with leaves

1. Insert toothpicks into the tops of the strawberries.
2. In a double boiler, melt the chocolate and shortening, stirring occasionally until smooth. Holding them by the toothpicks, dip the strawberries into the chocolate mixture.
3. Turn the strawberries upside down and insert the toothpick into Styrofoam for the chocolate to cool.

Source: <http://allrecipes.com/Recipe/chocolate-covered-strawberries/Detail.aspx>

As always, I ♥ YOUR REFERRALS. If anyone you know is in the market to buy, sell, or invest in a home, please send them my way! I'll make sure I find the right "match" for them.



Are You Ready For Some Football?

Tips To Make Your Super Bowl Sunday A Touchdown!

Whether your guests are the ultimate fans, fair-weather commercial watchers, or just want to kick back with friends and family, use these ideas to make your Sunday a Funday!

For starters

Whether you're rooting for the Steelers or the Packers, make sure you have the right party decorations and necessities. Some examples include: streamers, themed cups, plates and napkins, silverware, ice, sodas, water, or adult beverages, if desired.



Food

Hearty, salty, feel-good food is the name of the game on Super Bowl Sunday. Chili, chips, mixes, and dips are all good starters. Other must-have munchies: wings, burgers, hot dogs, and even international dishes will always get high-fives from your fans. For a fun football-themed dish, try a seven-layer football field: Use refried beans as the bottom layer, ground turkey as the next layer, then salsa. Add guacamole and cheese to make the field, canned olives for the sidelines and add sour cream to make the yard lines and end zones.

Fun

Halftime doesn't have to be all about eating more. Try taking the fun outdoors to play a quick game of football, or set up an obstacle course for the kids. Think about the oldie-but-goodie games such as horseshoes. Regardless of what you play, make sure you have prizes for the MVPs. Good suggestions: t-shirts drink cups, ribbons, or gift certificates.

February

Fool-Proofing The Sale Of Your Home



The scenario is all-too-real for many home sellers today. They put their home on the market. They're positive about the prospect of selling and settle on a price that meets their financial needs.

Six months later, however, they're left wondering, "Why hasn't my home sold?" If you're about to embark on the home-selling journey or you're in it for the long haul – take note of these selling pitfalls and ways you can avoid them.



Buyer's Remorse

Purchasing a home is one of the biggest decisions one can make, which is why some people have trouble committing to a home they may love. In fact, some will look for reasons to pull out of the buying process. Savvy sellers and their agents remind the buyer why they were attracted to the home in the first place. This might include pointing out the homes comparable value, the homes' features that match the buyers' needs or any additional features that help the home stand out.

Low Appraisals

Today, appraisers and the banks they represent are much more conservative when establishing fair market value. This may cause appraisers to issue a low appraisal of the home in question. Sellers can combat the low appraisal, however, by doing several things. First, defend the price of the home by providing a list of the homes that were used to establish the home's comparable value. Also, be sure to meet the appraiser at the home to point out any amenities or structural details that might not be obvious to the appraiser.

Conditions and Contingencies

Before the successful close of a transaction and during the escrow process, buyers and sellers must resolve certain conditions and contingencies. According to Trulia.com, a common condition of sale is the acceptance of an inspection report or the review of a preliminary title report. These issues can be problematic during escrow because they may be poorly written or do not include specific deadlines. One of the easiest ways to keep the sale from falling through the cracks is to ensure both parties are aware of the deadlines and conditions surrounding the contingencies.



Inspection Reports

Buyers don't like surprises, and one of the fastest ways to send a buyer running is if the inspection report reveals big problems after they make an offer on a home or if the report shows the house is in unfavorable condition. To avoid these problems, many sellers will hold a preliminary inspection prior to marketing their home. This way, they can address any unresolved problems that might arise in the home before buyers begin looking. Just be sure to disclose the preliminary report to any potential buyer and specifically any issues that were not fixed.



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February

Communication

Set aside the inspection reports, contingencies, appraisals or skittish buyers and one of the biggest deal breakers is communication, or the lack of it. Parties on the same page have a better chance of making it through escrow easily and without any hiccups. Keep the communications flowing by establishing a schedule. Make Tuesday the official conference call between all parties involved and always watch dates and deadlines so that you can extend any that may not be met on time.



Source: www.trulia.com



Top 10 (or more) Unique Romantic Gifts

Romantic gift giving can be stressful with having to come up with an idea that's unique and, of course, romantic. We have scoured the web to find the most unique romantic gifts out there.

1. 24k Gold Roses

24K Gold Roses are literally a gift that your sweetheart will treasure forever. www.24kFloral.com

3. Message in a Bottle

Get pure romance with a message in a bottle. If you're looking for a truly romantic gift, this is it. www.TimelessMessage.com

5. Her Own Star

If you want to give her/him the Universe (well, at least a piece of it), then this is the perfect gift. You can name a star after your sweetheart! www.StarRegistry.com

7. More Meaningful Flowers

Send her a gorgeous bouquet of paper roses, customized with your own romantic message. www.JustPaperRoses.com

9. Custom Canvas

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. If that's the case, a canvas picture is worth more. www.CanvasOnDemand.com

11. Gourmet Chocolate Strawberries

An evening with candles, champagne, and decadent, chocolate dipped strawberries tops the list of ultimate romance. Make your own. I gave you the recipe!!

2. Personalized Romance Novel

If you really want to surprise your sweetheart with something unique, check out www.YourNovel.com.

4. "I Love you" Toilet Paper

Yes, you read that right! This romantic toilet paper is one of the most unique ways to say "I Love You" that we've ever seen. www.JustPaperRoses.com

6. Photo Memory Book

If you're looking for a timeless gift that documents your romance, check out the new Snapfish Photo Memory Books. www.Snapfish.com

8. Personalized Love Poem

The majority of us are not poets. Now there's a solution! www.aGiftOfPoetry.com

10. Customized Box of Chocolate

Chocolate is not only delicious, but it's an aphrodisiac! Is there really a better gift? www.DansChocolates.com

12. Custom Sketches and Watercolors

My DaVinci offers another unique, romantic way to give the gift of memories. www.MyDaVinci.com

Edited/Condensed. Source: www.romancestuck.com



Curb Appeal Remains King

Did you know? As part of the *2010 – 2011 Remodeling Cost vs. Value Report*, members of the National Association of REALTORS® rated exterior replacement projects among the most cost-effective home improvement projects.

In fact, out of the ten most cost-effective projects rated nationally in terms of value recouped, nine were exterior replacement properties. As the saying goes, “It’s the *first impression* that will either open the door or close it” and in this case, giving your home’s exterior a fresh look means lasting money in your pocket if you’re planning to resell your home.

The steel entry door replacement remained the project that returned the most money, with an estimated 102.1% cost recouped upon sale. Second to the entry door, was the midrange garage door replacement; which is expected to recoup 83.9% of the cost. Both projects are estimated to cost less than \$1,200 each.

Other ways to improve your home’s exterior:

- Stain your driveway. For about \$30 a gallon you can give your concrete a whole new look. If your driveway is in worse condition, try fixing cracks or leveling any uneven areas.
- Trim your trees. Don’t hide your home behind long branches. Give your lawn a lift and a fresh look (even in wintertime) by trimming your trees and bushes to *frame* your humble abode.
- Prepare for spring. If you’re in an area where your lawn isn’t covered in frost, try planting a few substantial annuals to give your yard some color when the warm months roll around.
- Light it up. During colder months, the sun goes down earlier. For buyers who look a little later, make sure your home is lit up with additional low voltage (12v) lighting.

Happy Valentine’s Day!

Each year, many of us celebrate February 14th by sending out cards, chocolates and flowers to our loved ones. But who is St. Valentine and where did this holiday originate? Here’s an interesting tale to share with your sweetie on this special day.

Legend has it that Valentine was a priest in Rome under the reign of Emperor Claudius II. Because Claudius believed that wives and families served as distractions to his Roman soldiers, he ordered them NOT to become engaged or married.

Valentine defied the decree and performed marriage rituals for young couples. When Claudius discovered his defiance he ordered Valentine to be arrested, imprisoned and eventually put to death.

While in prison in Rome, Valentine supposedly wrote a letter to his sweetheart, signing it “From your Valentine,” an expression still used to this day.



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