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## Reflection and Remembrance

This September we give thanks to those who have made contributions and sacrifices in the armed forces.

## Blackberry Mint Lemonade

- 3 cups water
- 1 cup sugar
- 18 mint leaves, torn
- 2 cups frozen/fresh blackberries
- Ice
- 3 mint sprigs
- 4 cups natural store-bought lemonade



1. Bring the water and sugar to boil in a small pot. Stir the water/sugar mixture until the sugar is dissolved then turn off the heat. Add the torn mint leave and give the pot a stir. Allow the syrup to cool.

2. Add the blackberries to a blender. Place a strainer over the mouth of the blender and pour the mint syrup into the container. Discard the mint leaves. Blend the syrup and the blackberries on low speed for just a few seconds at a time, just enough to break the berries apart but not enough to puree them.

3. Fill a juice pitcher halfway with ice and add the mint sprigs. Pour the lemonade and the blackberry mixture over the ice. Stir the blackberry mint lemonade and add more ice if necessary before serving.

## HOME DECORATING TRENDS



Gray is the new neutral, wood floors are all the rage, and energy-efficient appliances have captured our eyes and our wallets. Home decor is as fluid as fashion. What's old is new, color trends come and go, and new styles become classics.

If you're about to sell your home, many real estate agents would suggest that you not go too crazy with experimental or fad trends, especially if they don't mix with the rest of the home's decor. If you decide that your home could benefit from some of the latest movement - a more neutral paint color or an open kitchen layout, for instance - just be sure it fits within your budget, decor, personal taste, and lifestyle.

### LIGHT COLOR PALETTES

Easy-on-the-eyes is still making a splash when it comes to color. Soft and creamy shades of black and white, various grey tones and appropriately-placed splashes of warmer colors are taking interiors into a relaxing, yet contemporary, place.

### FUNCTIONALITY AND PRACTICALITY

Everything in its right place seems to be at the heart of new homes and modern updates. Kitchen cabinets aren't just empty holes for stuff. Now they come with shelves for just about everything.

### METALS AND INDUSTRIAL DESIGNS

Metals are combined with other materials in frames and bases of modern chairs, tables, sofas, beds, and lighting fixtures.

### GEOMETRIC SHAPES AND CLEAN LINES

Natural shapes collide with punchy design when it comes to this trend. Softly curved lines, organic shapes, and natural interior decorating color schemes with stunning accents are popping up in interior as well as exterior accents.

### MIXING OF GLOBAL ELEMENTS

Globalization is showing up in every aspect of our lives - including our furniture, color schemes, and textiles. Ethnic interior decorating ideas and exotic patterns are prevalent and add a perfect pop of culture to modern and contemporary style.

### ECO-FRIENDLY, ENERGY-EFFICIENT APPLIANCES

Environmentally friendly designs, including recycling and up-cycling are emerging. Traditional materials, such as raw woods, linen cloth, burlap ropes, and checked fabrics with simple natural moods harken back to an original appreciation of beauty.



## Zillow – Friend or Fiendishly Clever?



Every seller's goal is to get the most amount of money for the value of their home. When pricing their home, they often listen to their agent's expert opinion (often a report called a CMA - Comparative Market Analysis) and then insist "**Zillow says my house is worth more!**" and then they watch their Realtor® cringe. If you have the right agent, the cringe will be nearly undetectable and they'll properly explain why you should take the Zestimate with a "grain of salt".

Zillow's *Zestimates* are called AVMs or "Automated Valuation Models". They are computer algorithms or formulas designed to price property. What's wrong with this? These algorithms have no way to consider the condition of your home. Do you need a new roof, windows, or HVAC system? Are you in a high flood zone or have soil settlement issues? On the flip side, AVMs make broad assumptions that do not take into account special factors such as water views, kitchen updates, high end appliances, interior upgrades such as wood flooring, custom woodwork and fixtures, garage conversions, etc. They use averages in their calculations rather than real world pricing adjustments which only an experienced, on-site Realtor® can perform.

In reality, AVMs generate a statistical range of prices rather than a specific sales price. Zillow, for example, has a *sampling error* of about plus or minus 7.5%. Translated to home pricing, this means that on a \$300,000 property, the price has a 95% probability of being between \$277,500 and \$322,500. **That's a \$45,000 range!!** On a \$300,000 listing, most experienced agents can predict the price within \$5,000-\$10,000.

Are AVMs all bad? Certainly not if, like any tool, they are used properly. In fact, agents have access to many AVMs themselves. The best way to use AVMs is to get estimates from several different AVMs and try to determine the value that makes the most sense to you. This won't be easy for you, the homeowner, because you probably have developed an emotional attachment to your home and just don't have the experience of a well-seasoned Realtor®. Your best bet is to listen to your gut and the experts. Your agent's job is to price your home properly from the start. They understand the markets and the current buying habits and will be able to help you create a pricing strategy that sells your home as quickly and for as much money as possible. Remember, the market determines the price in most cases.

*Some other AVMs are HomeSnap, ePropertyWatch, and Moveup. In late July, Zillow bought Trulia for \$3.5 billion.*

Some material sourced from AgentDirectNews



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Our Granddaughter,  
Clara Grace, turned two.