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Better Home Living™

The Newsletter That's Both Informative and Fun!

Fireplace safety

Where there's soot, there may soon be fire. Professional chimney cleaners say any soot deposits more than a quarter-inch thick present a fire hazard.

The soot, called creosote, is one of the top reasons for the thousands of fires involving fireplaces each year, according to the National Fire Protection Association. Creosote is flammable and should be cleaned out annually if the fireplace is used very much. Find a National Chimney Sweep Guild Certified chimney sweep.

* Have a cap installed at the top of the chimney to keep it from becoming blocked by birds, animals, or debris.

* Use clean-burning wood. Hardwoods like oak burn cleaner than softwoods like pine. Dried wood burns cleaner than green.

* Follow directions when using manufactured fire logs. Use one at a time. Don't crack or break manufactured logs. This will release energy at a high rate, resulting in a shorter burn time. Fire logs create less creosote than wood.

* Make a fire that fits the fireplace. If it's too big or too hot, it wastes fuel and can crack the chimney.

* If the fireplace has glass doors, leave them open while burning a fire log to allow air circulation and cleaner burning.

* Always use a fireplace screen.

* Keep a fire extinguisher on hand and have smoke detectors throughout the house.

* Use kindling to start a fire. Never use flammable liquid.

* When building a fire, place logs at the rear of the fireplace, preferably on a grate.

* Don't burn anything but wood in the fireplace. Never burn a Christmas tree.

* Keep the area around the fireplace and chimney clear of flammables.

Read this before starting to shovel snow

Check these instructions from a specialist in ergonomics before you head out to tackle the beautiful white stuff:

* Keep your spine in an upright, neutral position.

* No slouching or twisting.

* Bend at the hips and knees to get lower to the ground.

* Use your leg muscles to lift the load.

* Avoid throwing the snow if you can.

* Keep the load low to the ground and close to your body.

* If you must throw it, don't throw it far.

* Use the big muscles from the hips and legs to push the snow whenever you can.

* Adequate rest is critical.

* How long you can work depends on how heavy the snow is, your physical condition, and how cold it is outside.

* If you feel fatigue, pain, or shortness of breath, rest until you feel normal again. If you have shortness of breath for a prolonged period, see your doctor immediately.

* Using a snowblower is also physically demanding and requires rest breaks.

Free Cleaning Tips at www.mopsnbuckets.com



I hope you enjoy this month's newsletter!

*Christopher Dunlap
Mops & Buckets, LLC*

2020: It has sounded like the future for years

You have arrived at the year 2020 -- a historic year where we have finally trained animals to do the hard work, like the gorilla that flies the family helicopter. The only thing we worry about is that, what with self-cleaning houses and all, the animals will be unemployed.

Oh wait, none of that is true. But smart folks predicted it would be, because the year 2020 just seemed so futuristic.

Take off your jet packs, citizens of 2020, there is some bad news for all ordinary time travelers. Contrary to what some bigwigs predicted, we won't teleport ourselves at will nor will we read people's minds. Most of us, anyway.

And, we aren't colonizing Mars.

Still, this is a time of change. In just the last 60 years, we've gone to the moon, started living cyber-lives on social media, and mainly stopped getting paychecks on paper. Today, we don't need to have mail delivered via rocket, as predicted by the Postmaster General in the 1960s. We have email, so junk travels in the blink of an eye.

Thanks to social media, we know the letters C, X and Q are still in the alphabet, contrary to what John E. Watkins, Jr. predicted in 1900. But, also thanks to social media, we now know few people know the difference between "there," "their," and "they're."

In the next 100 years, technologies like 3D printing, biotechnology, robotics, digital currency, and wearables all look poised to change everything. But who knows? In 2200, someone will probably be chuckling about people who thought we could print out a robot at our desk. Or not.



Do You Know...

... someone that could use our services? Perhaps a friend, family member, co-worker, or someone from church?

When a new client signs up for regular cleaning services at your recommendation; you will receive \$100 after their 4th cleaning!

If you would think of 3 or 4 people that could use our services, then don't hesitate to call them and give them our name and phone number. Be sure to have them mention your name when they call so we can send your \$100 Bonus!

Thanks in advance for your help and we look forward to sending cash your way!

Thanks a Bunch!

A special thanks to all our customers who referred us!

Survey of your fitness levels: These four numbers give you a snapshot of your health

Harvard doctors agree that health can be an overwhelming topic. But they say that if you have a handle on these four numbers, you can have a pretty good idea of where you stand and what to do about it.

1. Your body mass index (BMI). Many people are overweight and don't think they are. The health risks climb when you reach the overweight level. Here's what they mean:

Underweight is a BMI of less than 18.5, and normal weight is a BMI of 18.5 to 24.9.

Overweight is a BMI of 25 to 29.9, and obesity is a BMI of 30 or over. If your calculation shows more than 24.9, it's time to lose weight. To get a fast BMI rating, see nhlbisupport.com/bmi/bmicalc.htm. Just enter your height and weight.

2. Your blood pressure. Ideally, it should be 120/80 or below. Starting at 115/75, the risk for heart attack, stroke, and other cardiovascular disease doubles with each increment of 20/10.

People with systolic blood pressure (the first number) of 120 to 139 or a diastolic of 80 to 90 are "prehypertensive." Changes in diet and activity patterns can help prevent cardiovascular disease at this level.

3. Your fasting glucose. If you have two fasting plasma glucose measurements of 126 mg/dL or greater, you have diabetes.

4. Your LDL cholesterol level. Your bad cholesterol reading should be below 100, but 70 is better. Diet, exercise, and medications like statins, or all three, can lower your LDL, reducing your heart disease risk by about a third.

TO PUT YOUR RIGHT FOOT IN, PRESS 5...
TO TAKE IT OUT, PRESS 6... TO PUT...



HOKEY POKEY HOTLINE

Spicy chicken and sweet potato stew warms up everyone

Ahhh, stew. It's a comfort food in the harsh winter, not only in its makeup but in its usefulness: we can stand over a steaming bowl and feel warmth on our face. Plus, it's a great way to use up that stray potato left over from the holidays.

Stews start with a base of liquid, meat cut into cubes, and typically some type of root vegetables. Categories typically include brown stews, in which the meat is browned in fat before the liquid is added, and white stews, in which it is not.

Although stews are generally considered a pedestrian dish, there are some, like beef burgundy, that are fine dining approved. And every culture seems to have its twist, according to Encyclopedia.com: from Argentinians who add fruit and bake them in a pumpkin or squash shell, to bigos, also known as hunter's stew, considered Poland's national dish.

Here is a recipe for spicy chicken and sweet potato stew from the website Allrecipes. It's easy, hearty, and, like the appeal of most stews, it's a one-pot meal.

Ingredients (makes 6 servings):

1 teaspoon olive oil	2 tablespoons chili powder
1 onion, chopped	1 teaspoon ground cumin
4 cloves garlic, minced	1 teaspoon dried oregano
1-pound sweet potato, peeled and cubed	1 teaspoon cocoa powder
1 orange bell pepper, seeded and cubed	1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1-pound cooked chicken breast, cubed	1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
1 (28 ounce) can diced tomatoes	1 1/2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
2 cups water	2 tablespoons water
1 teaspoon salt	1 cup frozen corn
	1 (16 ounce) can kidney beans rinsed and drained
	1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro

Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Stir in onion and garlic; cook and stir until the onion has softened and turned translucent, about 5 minutes. Stir in sweet potato, bell pepper, chicken, tomatoes, and 2 cups of water. Season with salt, chili powder, cumin, oregano, cocoa powder, cinnamon, and red pepper flakes. Increase heat to medium-high and bring to a boil.

Dissolve flour in 2 tablespoons water and stir in to boiling stew. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover, and simmer until the potatoes are tender but not mushy, 10 to 20 minutes. Stir the stew occasionally to keep it from sticking.

Once the potatoes are done, stir in corn and kidney beans. Cook a few minutes until hot, then stir in cilantro before serving.



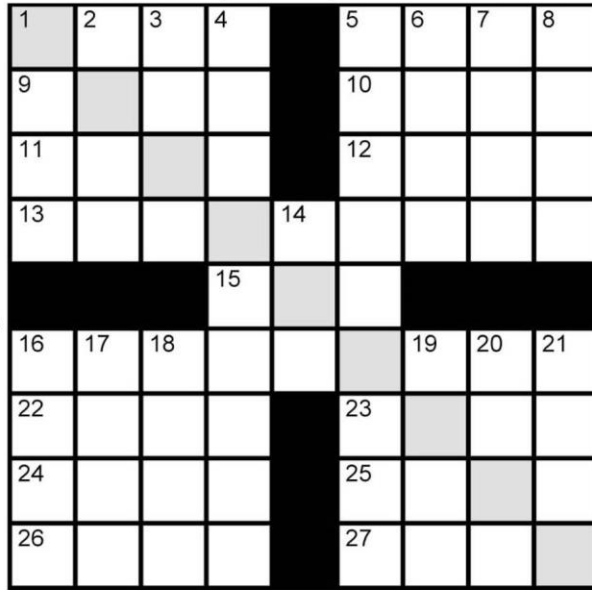
Crescent pastry

Across

1. Spanish sparkling wine
5. Muslim holy man
9. Buffalo's lake
10. Showy flower
11. Last name in fashion
12. Ancient Peruvian
13. Oval-shaped figure
15. Volcanic spew
16. Not idealized
22. Wrinkly fruit
23. Trig function
24. Soccer ____
25. Lab item
26. Furtive summons
27. Left on a map

Down

1. Formally surrender
2. Seed covering
3. Six-stringed instrument
4. Trapeze artist
5. Hearty pub meal
6. Pre-stereo
7. Fungal spore sacs
8. "Beowulf" beverage
14. Last Greek consonant
16. Backside
17. Freudian topics
18. Charity
19. London art gallery
20. Places to overnight
21. Talk



L	S	E	M		T	S	S	D
V	N	T	E		S	M	O	M
H	N	V	T		I	G	U	
C	I	T	S		A	L	R	E
				H	S	A		
D	I	O	S		P	I	L	E
V	C	N	I		R	O	D	
E	S	O	R		E	R	E	
M	A	M	I		A	V	A	C

The headline is a clue to the answer in the diagonal.

Trivia Teaser – Try Your Luck

1. Which actor detailed his battle with Parkinson's disease in the 2003 memoir "Lucky Man"? a-Willem Dafoe, b-Michael J. Fox, c-Gary Sinise, d-James Garner.
2. Which musician was a member of the Traveling Wilburys under the alias "Lucky"? a-Roy Orbison, b-George Harrison, c-Tom Petty, d-Bob Dylan.
3. Young Lucky Jenkins was a sidekick of which movie cowboy? a-Hopalong Cassidy, b-Lash Larue, c-The Cisco Kid, d-The Durango Kid.
4. Who created the animated character Oswald the Lucky Rabbit in 1927? a-Walt Disney, b-E.C. Segar, c-Stan Lee, d-A.A. Milne.
5. Who provided vocals on the 2013 Grammy-winning Daft Punk hit song "Get Lucky"? a-Josh Groban, b-Josh Homme, c-Pharrell Williams, d-Shawn Mendes.
6. Luanne Platter married Lucky Kleinschmidt on which animated TV series? a-"King of the Hill," b-"Archer," c-"American Dad," d-"The Venture Bros."
7. Which Oscar-winning actor made his Broadway debut in the 2013 Nora Ephron play "Lucky Guy"? a-Matthew McConaughey, b-Russell Crowe, c-Tom Hanks, d-Cuba Gooding Jr.
8. Andrew Luck suddenly retired as the quarterback for which NFL team in 2019? a-New Orleans Saints, b-Baltimore Ravens, c-Philadelphia Eagles, d-Indianapolis Colts.
9. Which game show was introduced as "the game where knowledge is king and Lady Luck is queen"? a-"Gambit," b-"High Rollers," c-"Press Your Luck," d-"The Joker's Wild."
10. Born Salvatore Lucania, Italian-born mobster "Lucky" Luciano assumed which different first name? a-Frank, b-Charles, c-Donald, d-Eric.

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1-b, Michael J. Fox | 10-b, Charles |
| 2-d, Bob Dylan | 9-d, "The Joker's Wild" |
| 3-a, Hopalong Cassidy | 8-d, Indianapolis Colts |
| 4-a, Walt Disney | 7-c, Tom Hanks |
| 5-c, Pharrell Williams | 6-a, "King of the Hill" |

Answers to "Try Your Luck"

Prevent hacks into home security system

The latest home security gadgets are a far cry from the early days of simple motion detectors. Whether it's the Ring video doorbell, which alerts you to someone at your front door (and allows you to talk to them), or other systems that use facial or voice recognition, we've got cameras and eyes everywhere.

The downside, of course, is the potential for hackers to access those cameras and find their way into our homes.

Consumer Reports offers tips to keep our home security cameras from being hacked:

- * Keep your camera's firmware up to date. Some cameras automatically download and install these updates, which fix software bugs and patch software vulnerabilities, while others require you to check for updates on your own.
- * Change your camera's password. You should approach your security camera's password the same as your other devices and use long and complex passwords without personally identifying information.
- * Set up two-factor authentication if possible. This means the camera company sends you a onetime-use passcode via text, phone, email, or authentication app that you input in addition to your username and password when you log in to the account. As CR points out, even if a hacker cracks your password, they won't be able to access your camera unless they also gain access to your onetime code.
- * Set up a password manager. A password manager generates strong, random passwords and stores and remembers them for you. Many are free.

(786) 350-1736
mopsnbuckets@hotmail.com
www.mopsnbuckets.com

About Our Company

Mops & Buckets is a full-service residential cleaning company that operates in both Miami Dade and Broward Counties.

Services include general cleaning, deep cleaning, carpet cleaning, construction cleaning, move-in/out cleaning, and window washing.

Owner Christopher Dunlap has been in the cleaning industry for 10 years and feels it is important to provide cleaning services that place the utmost importance on the health and safety of his clients and employees. For that reason, Mops & Buckets is an active participant in the industry association ISSA (International Sanitary Supply Association). They also use Green Sealed Certified products to minimize toxins being released both in the environment and your home.

Home Tips

Wash the blender. Avoid those sharp blades by blending the device clean. Fill one-third full of water. Add three drops of dishwashing liquid. Run blender for 10 to 20 seconds. Rinse and dry.

Quick breadcrumbs. Tear up leftover buns freeze in a zip bag. When ready for breadcrumbs, don't bother thawing. Just pop the pieces in a food processor for 20 pulses.

Towels: Light or dark? Light-colored towels fade less easily but dark colored towels effectively hide mascara marks. Just clean using a bleach spray and a dark towel since it might bleach the towel.

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Click on the link below or copy it into your web browser to get started!

<https://msd.reviewability.com/f-57728>

What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared with what lies within us.

~Oliver Wendell Holmes

Computer Vision in our daily lives

Computer Vision, or CV, will become bigger and bigger in the tech world and our everyday lives heading into 2020.

CV involves computers' ability to recognize and interpret images, items -- and perhaps most famously, faces. It can be as innocuous as the way our phones are able to focus on a face to much more sophisticated uses.

In the year ahead, look for CV to show up more and more. Here are some of those ways:

Facial recognition. You might use it to unlock your iPhone, or you may see it crop up more often in places like airports. An article in Forbes Magazine mentioned Dubai airport's use of facial recognition to provide a smoother customer journey.

Autonomous cars. Whether this one happens soon or not, we're likely to see the technology put to use for shipping purposes.

Security cameras. Security systems have come a long way from simple motion-detectors.

Assistance for the visually impaired. Technology exists for a smartphone to verbally describe the objects in a photograph posted to Facebook, for example.

Smartphone Apps. A Pinterest app called Lens can tell users where someone purchased the sneakers they're wearing in a picture, says an article in Internet of Things for All. It can even show shoes that match the design and styling of the one in the photo.

Deposit a check. This one's been around for a while -- you can deposit a check simply by taking a picture of it on your phone. CV technology helps verify that the signature on the check is real, among other bits of information.

FREE Couch Cleaning with Whole House Carpet Cleaning

**\$250 minimum purchase
Couches up to 7 feet wide
(up to \$100 value)**

Schedule your appointment by February 15, 2020

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www.mopsnbuckets.com

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