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Better Home Living™

The Newsletter That's Both Informative and Fun!

Before the guests arrive, clean the fridge

A refrigerator with plenty of room is a must when guests are bringing their famous dishes for the holiday feast.

Of course, that means (cue scary music): Cleaning. Out. The. Fridge.

Even the best housekeepers sometimes find an unknown green thing at the back of the fridge. But what you don't want is for your guest to find it.

So, here is the best way to clean the fridge, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

1. Completely empty the fridge. Nothing halfway this time. Take out shelving, drawers, and all moving and removable parts.
2. Give the parts a little time to come to room temperature. If you run hot water on cold glass shelves, they could crack.
3. Soak and wash by hand in hot water with dish detergent.
4. Wipe down the inside of the empty refrigerator with hot soapy water. Dry with a clean towel.
5. Sanitize with 1 tablespoon of liquid bleach to 1 gallon of water.
6. Wipe down any containers you are returning to the refrigerator.
7. Wipe down counters and tables used for the refrigerator parts. Wash towels you have used. Finally wash your hands.

Board game sales spike during quarantine

What has everyone been doing during the endless months of COVID-19 quarantine? Lots of families turned to old-fashioned board games for inexpensive and socially distanced entertainment.

According to Tech Gaming Report, Hasbro, manufacturers of the classic board game Monopoly, reports that board game sales have increased more than 20 percent during the COVID-19 pandemic. The company also sells Clue, Jenga, Twister, Life, Guess Who and Scrabble.

The increase comes as many schools continue virtual instruction and kids face limited options for other activities. At twenty dollars and accommodating up to eight players, the value for families is hard to beat as they look for ways to stay busy.

Board games do more than just entertain kids for a low one-time price. According to The Irish News, board gaming is a great activity for families to bond while boosting children's interpersonal skills and cognitive abilities. For parents looking for screen-free activities, board games might be a perfect solution for family fun.

Family game night also might provide a mental health boost for pandemic-stressed families. According to the Irish Times, taking time to play board games together reduces isolation, can provide some much-needed laughs, and help families temporarily escape from their worries.

If your usual board game buddies aren't part of your quarantine pod, digital board gaming opportunities abound, according to Inside Hook. Tabletop Simulator, available at tabletopsimulator.com, lets you and your friends meet around a virtual table and enjoy a board game night. The online computer gaming platform Steam, best known for video games, also offers old-school board game options.

Free Cleaning Tips at www.mopsnbuckets.com



I hope you enjoy this month's newsletter!

*Christopher Dunlap
Mops & Buckets, LLC*

Nutcrackers highlight Christmas traditions

Simple Christmas treats of oranges and nuts thrilled children throughout history, and the remnants of those traditions are still with us in decorative Nutcrackers.

Nutcracker historians say Aristotle possessed one around 330 B.C., but the wooden standing-man versions were first seen in the Erzgebirge area of Germany during the 1700s. They were known as "nut-biters." Two moving arms on the back of the head allowed the lower jaw to push the nut against the upper jaw freeing the fruit inside.

According to German lore, nutcrackers were given as presents to bring good luck to a family and act as protectors throughout the year.

Nutcrackers were often dressed as soldiers and kings. Villagers were delighted to have these authoritative figures cracking the nuts that often acted as dessert in Europe. Imagine cracking your filberts with Napoleon!

Traditional nutcrackers are often dressed in shades of red but dark green and blue are also employed. While wood is still the most popular medium, versions have been produced in porcelain, silver, ivory, bone, and brass.

Nutcrackers became popular at Christmas during the Victorian era when children began to receive smaller versions of nutcrackers in their Christmas stockings.

Today, their popularity has been enhanced by the traditional performances of Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker Suite" ballet during the Christmas season.



Do You Know...

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 do not 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!

Retailers play guessing game with holiday sales

At the start of the 2020 holiday shopping season, stores are boarded up. Riots threaten. Covid is still on the mind.

How does a retailer prepare?

Many retailers aren't even sure how much staff to hire. After all, staffing is usually based, in part, on history. But history doesn't apply to 2020.

Many stores have closed. U.S. retailers have announced more than 8,000 store closures this year, according to Coresight Research. That is fewer than last year with nearly 9,000 closures.

Store traffic and sales are down at least 30 percent not only from Covid, but also because of online shopping.

According to Price Waterhouse Coopers, 61 percent plan to do the majority of holiday shopping online. Last year the number was 54 percent. This year, 54 percent of shoppers plan to ship gifts directly to recipients, according to Accenture.

For big box retailers, the question is whether they should staff up for order fulfillment or put people on the registers.

In most cases, specialty retailers have had to become fulfillment experts. They have to expect less browsing in their stores on the ground and more uncertainty in acquiring the products that can sell.



"No, we don't need to call the fire department."

Festive make-ahead salad shows off Christmas colors

Pickled beet and mozzarella salad is a great seasonal vegetable dish that can be made ahead of time, assembled quickly, and looks beautiful on a plate.

Best of all, beets don't just look great—they're nutritional powerhouses with ample antioxidants, fiber, folate, potassium, iron, and vitamin C. Homemade balsamic reduction is a snap to make at home and keeps in the refrigerator for a long time. No need to buy top-shelf vinegar – a cheap bottle will work just fine.

Beets and glaze can be prepared days ahead of time and plated before service. Use a mix of red and golden beets and experiment with herbs and spices to personalize this dish to your own tastes. If you use multicolored beets, you may want to cook and pickle them separately to avoid staining golden beets with red juice.

Recipe

- 6-8 medium fresh beets
- 1 cup vinegar (apple cider works fine, or you can create your own mix)
- 1/2 cup white sugar or less to taste
- 1 1/2 teaspoons whole cloves
- 1 1/2 teaspoons whole allspice
- 1 bay leaf (optional)
- 1 teaspoon salt

Other ingredients:

- 1 cup balsamic vinegar
- Fresh mozzarella cheese – usually sold in approximately eight-ounce balls, each ball will make four to six servings

Remove tops from beets and scrub thoroughly. Place beets in a large pot and add water to cover. Bring beets to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for about 30 minutes. Remove the beets from water and rinse in cool water, rubbing the skin with your fingers to remove. Use a sharp knife to slice off any stubborn skin. Slice the beets around one-half to one-quarter inch thick, arrange them in a shallow dish and set aside.

Combine the vinegar, sugar, cloves, allspice, and salt in a small saucepan and bring to a boil for about five minutes. Pour pickling mixture over pickled beets, turning and stirring as needed to coat each slice. You may have leftover pickling mixture. Place beets in the refrigerator for at least an hour before serving, preferably overnight.

To make the balsamic reduction: Bring one cup of balsamic vinegar to a boil in a small pot, then reduce temperature and simmer for 10-15 minutes until reduced by one-third to one-half, depending upon your preference. The reduction will continue to thicken as it cools. For a sweeter glaze, add one to two tablespoons of maple syrup or honey. Pour finished reduction into a jar and refrigerate until serving.

To serve, thinly slice fresh mozzarella and arrange with chilled beet slices on a salad plate. Use a spoon to drizzle glaze over the top. Top with shredded fresh basil leaves, freshly ground pepper, and flaky salt, if desired.



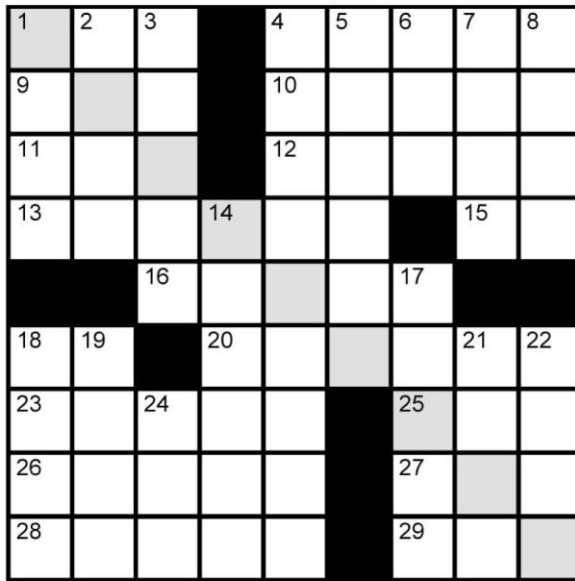
Festive assembly

Across

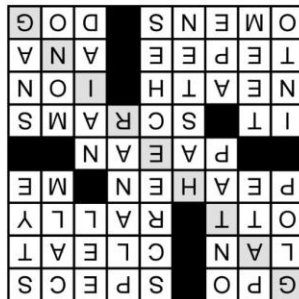
1. Fed's document producer
4. Glasses
9. PC linkup
10. Athletic shoe feature
11. Hall-of-Famer Mel
12. Come from behind
13. Female fowl
15. Northeasternmost st.
16. Song of praise
18. Tagged player
20. Beats it
23. Poet's "below"
25. Lithium-___ battery
26. Home on the range
27. Santa ___ winds
28. Forebodings
29. Lab or golden

Down

1. Hardly haute cuisine
2. Toast topping
3. Available
4. Braking sounds
5. Flat



6. Moray, e.g.
7. Storm preceder
8. Eye sore
14. Move quickly
17. Water nymph
18. Keen on
19. Abound
21. Like old recordings
22. Unforeseen difficulty
24. Gorilla



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

Trivia Teaser – Ship Ahoy

1. Which American aircraft carrier fought in the Battles of Midway and the Coral Sea before it was sunk? a-USS Antietam, b-USS Yorktown, c-USS Missouri, d-USS Nimitz.
2. Aboard a ship, what is housed in a binnacle? a-Compass, b-Anchor chain, c-Weapons, d-Fresh water.
3. What term is used for the top edge of the hull of a ship? a-Plimssole, b-Prow, c-Fantail, d-Gunwale.
4. Who commanded a fleet against the combined forces of Mark Antony and Queen Cleopatra in the Battle of Actium? a-Hannibal, b-Octavian, c-Marcus Agrippa, d-Alexander the Great.
5. What does the yellow jack flag indicate aboard a ship? a-Ready for departure, b-Dangerous cargo, c-Quarantine, d-Man overboard.
6. What title movie character is declared a hero after he saves his ship's commander, Quintus Arrius, from drowning? a-King Kong, b-Spartacus, c-David Copperfield, d-Ben-Hur.
7. In a 1939 children's book, what kind of boat is "Little Toot"? a-Trawler, b-Houseboat, c-Dinghy, d-Tugboat.
8. What inventor built a hydrofoil watercraft launched in 1919 that set a world record speed of 70 mph? a-Nikola Tesla, b-James Watt, c-Alexander Graham Bell, d-Samuel Morse.
9. What was the name of Captain Quint's fishing boat in the movie blockbuster "Jaws"? a-Orca, b-Otter, c-Dugong, d-Pelican.
10. The Cunard cruise ship, Queen Elizabeth, was being refurbished in a harbor in what city when she caught fire in 1972? a-Haifa, b-Hong Kong, c-Honolulu, d-Havana.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|
| 1-b, USS Yorktown | 5-c, Quarantine |
| 2-a, Compass | 4-b, Octavian |
| 3-d, Gunwale | 9-a, Orca |
| 4-c, Alexander Graham Bell | 10-b, Hong Kong |
| 5-c, Quarantine | |
| 6-d, Ben-Hur | |
| 7-d, Tugboat | |
| 8-c, Alexander Graham Bell | |
| 9-a, Orca | |
| 10-b, Hong Kong | |

Answers to 'Ship Ahoy'

Fitness Trend: Cognitive workouts

No, we're not talking crossword puzzles. One of the newest exercise trends involves fitness challenges combined with brain challenges.

An instructor guides you through a workout while also leading you through verbal brain games. A few examples from Harvard Medical School: Count backwards by twos, call out the name of the president in a certain year, or remember three numbers that you'll have to recite later.

The brain must meet the extra challenge as it works to engage in physical and cognitive activities at the same time. In turn, that engages the frontal lobes, which are key to decision making, controlling impulses, planning and other executive functions.

Though they sound intriguing, these classes can also be difficult to find. Some health clubs are just beginning to incorporate brain games into fitness classes.

In true 2020 style, you can also try it out at home. One company touting the benefits of cognitive workouts is SMARTfit Active, which advertises sports performance and brain health fitness for home. You can convert an area of your home into your workout space using their equipment and "gamified programming."

Keep an eye out for smartphone apps, currently in beta testing, that pledge to help you with your fitness and your neuroplasticity.



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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.

Another reason to get a flu shot

If you need another reason to get a flu shot this year, consider this one unpleasant scenario: It is possible to get COVID-19 and the flu at the same time--a catastrophic and possibly lethal combination. Symptoms of both are much the same, but many COVID-19 patients report a loss of taste of smell.

A flu shot helps to avoid this double whammy.

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

A ship in port is safe, but that's not what ships are built for.
~Grace Murray Hopper

Scammers prey on payment app users

Peer-to-peer mobile payment services, like CashApp, Venmo and Zelle are portable, fast and allow users to move money and make purchases with just a wave or a few taps on the screen. Users can avoid touching cash or handing cards back and forth--a major plus during the COVID-19 pandemic--and pay for services or reimburse friends in an instant. As payment apps continue to change the way we handle our money, scammers are also hard at work innovating new ways to swipe our digital wallets. According to the New York Times, "fast fraud" is surging as more users turn to payment apps.

One common CashApp scam involves fake customer support numbers, according to Blackhawk Bank. Scammers list fake phone support numbers for CashApp users to gain access to devices and steal personal information. Users find fake customer support numbers through Google searches, and scammers convince users to download screen-sharing apps to grant them access to devices. Once scammers gain access to sensitive information, they can help themselves user bank accounts. The real CashApp does not offer phone support, according to the Better Business Bureau.

According to the New York Times, thieves can set up accounts as easily as legitimate users. The popular payment app Venmo, for example, requires just a phone number. That same ease of use lets scammers send requests for money to other users. And lightning-fast transactions create ample opportunity for lightning-fast fraud.

While Square (which owns CashApp), PayPal (which owns Venmo) and Zelle do not disclose fraud rates, experts believe Zelle to be the highest-security option, due to its authentication process and greater legal protections for users. As the biggest player on the market, CashApp is believed to encounter the most scammers.

FREE Cleaning!

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Schedule by Dec. 31st

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