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Better Home Living™

The Newsletter That's Both Informative and Fun!

Use caution with sanitizers around children

We know to store cleaners and medicines out of reach of children, but what about that hand sanitizer we've been generously applying the past year?

Exercise caution, as hand sanitizers contain isopropyl alcohol or ethyl alcohol, the latter being the same stuff found in beer, wine, and other liquor, not to mention perfume and after shave -- but at higher concentrations. Poison control centers recommend keeping hand sanitizer out of reach of children, same as other potentially harmful substances.

Because many hand sanitizers come in bright packaging and are perfumed (including grape, cherry, and other sweet scents), young children are sometimes tempted to taste them. A lick of the hand is unlikely to cause a problem, but more than a taste can be cause for concern.

And while we tend to think about poison control methods at home, parents of small children should also be alert to hand sanitizer dispensers in public. The French Poison Control Center reported an increase in the number of children with eye injuries in 2020, with hospital cases entirely by children under age four. The dispensers, though at waist height for adults, are at eye level for small children, who can accidentally squirt the substance into their eyes.

Recipe for a healthy, happy life

There are no magic pills or secret elixirs to create a healthy, happy life. There are mainly just small decisions we make every day.

Maintain a schedule. For most, work frames our schedules. Within that frame, however, it's important to have routines. Have a time to relax, exercise, to touch base with other people. Go to bed at the same time and get 7 to 8 hours of sleep, according to the Harvard Health letter.

Get out and about. Even if you have a desk job, take frequent opportunities to get up and walk, even just to get a drink of water. Movement maintains flexibility, balance, and strength. Even a little movement in spurts of 15 minutes or so is better than none. Take the stairs. Park away from the store entrance.

Eat well. Many doctors recommend a plant-based diet of vegetables, nuts, seeds, and fruits added in healthy proportions to animal-based foods. Eat in moderation.

Silence, meditation, prayer. Take a moment every day to clear your mind and rest in silence. According to Harvard Health, a research review published in JAMA Internal Medicine in January 2014 found meditation helpful for relieving anxiety, pain, and depression. For depression, meditation was about as effective as an antidepressant.

Forge community and family. Friendships and community can be found in social, religious, or other groups with shared interests. Friendships can grow from activities. Family usually forges the most long-lasting relationships. But whatever path is open to you, remember that strong social connections increase your chance of longevity, and may even help you recover faster from illness.



I hope you enjoy this month's newsletter!

*Christopher Dunlap
Mops & Buckets, LLC*

Time for those lovely daffodils!

It might get too cold in Washington, D.C. for the cherry blossoms.

But as March moves into April, expect the lovely and hardy daffodil to appear, bright yellow or white, peeking its trumpet head through the snow or cold to ring in the spring.

Those dependable spring blooms all have a history. Someone planted them to perk up a corner in the garden or trim a fence. And they grow, whether that home or garden or that person is there or not. In fact, they can grow undisturbed for decades, even centuries in the same plot, according to The Washington Post.

Their secret hardiness comes from a thick skin that shelters the inside of the bulb, where the leaf and flower are developing in late winter. The bulb itself keeps growing year after year, continuously absorbing nutrients all year round.

It is a flower known for thousands of years. First mention of them comes from a Greek botanist around 300 BC. They were brought to Britain by the Romans and grew freely in northern Europe.

Plant daffodil bulbs in the fall (especially October), three times deeper than the size of the bulb. Separate bulbs in the spring, but let their yellowing stems remain to support the bulb.



Free Cleaning Tips at www.mopsnbuckets.com

Want to Receive a *FREE* cleaning?

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!

Get organized now for the 2021 tax year

Each year, millions of Americans scramble to locate every receipt, form, pay stub and scrap of documentation they need to maximize their income tax refunds, or at least minimize the amount that they owe to the United States government on April 15.

If this sounds like you today doing your taxes for the 2020 tax year, it's time to adopt a new way to prepare for the 2021 tax year now.

According to Turbo Tax, the best way to maintain a good record of receipts and expenses is to handle them regularly, so you can avoid tracking down months-old materials. They recommend color-coded folders in an easy-to-access location. Folders might include home and office expenses, vehicle expenses and mileage, education costs, childcare expenses, medical expenses, and other items, such as charitable donations, work uniform purchase and cleaning costs (for work-only attire) and work-related expenses. Turbo Tax also recommends that you scan each receipt and maintain both electronic and paper copies.

If the multi-folder system sounds like too much hassle, The Motley Fool recommends a simpler three-folder tax filing system.

Folder number one: Income.

Folder number two: Expenses and deductions

Folder number three: Investments.

Maintaining a year-round system for tax documents may sound annoying, but it pays off big. In 2015, taxpayers left about \$1.4 billion in tax refunds on the table with failure to file returns and other tax mishaps, according to CNBC.



"This anti-grump patch is working. I've only yelled 'Get Off My Lawn' three times today."

Chickpea Pantry Pasta: A fun meal as winter gives way to spring

During the last weeks of winter, when decent seasonal produce becomes increasingly scarce and slushy, and miserable weather keeps us stuck inside, we all still wrestle with one age-old question: What should we make for dinner? Don't stress -- easy pantry pasta is quick, simple, forgiving and lets us flex our creative muscles for an affordable and fun meal. And most ingredients keep well in the pantry or are available year-round at most grocery stores. This recipe creates a salty, cheesy, bright, and filling meal in no time, and can be adapted to feed yourself or a crowd.

Ingredients:

1 box dried pasta (large tube-shaped works best)
1 can (14 oz.) chickpeas
1 small onion, diced
2-3 cloves garlic, minced
1 bunch kale, cleaned and chopped
1 bunch fresh rosemary
(dried also works)

4-5 tablespoons butter
1 medium-sized lemon
Preferred cooking oil or fat
About one cup dry white wine or white wine vinegar and water
Parmesan or other hard aged cheese, grated (half a cup or so, depending on your preference)
Salt and pepper to taste



Optional add-ons: 5 minced pitted Kalamata or Castelvetrano olives; 1 tablespoon capers

A few minutes ahead of time, start heating a pot of salted water for your pasta. Then, in a medium-sized sauté pan over medium-high heat, bring about a tablespoon of cooking oil up to temperature until shimmering. Dump in the whole can of chickpeas and cook until the chickpeas take on some color, stirring every so often. Add a generous pinch of rosemary leaves, making sure to break in half to release flavor, and add salt and pepper. Continue cooking until fragrant, adding more oil or butter if needed. When chickpeas are hot and smelling great, dump in the small onion and cook until softened, then add the garlic and cook until fragrant. With a wooden spoon, scrape any fond that may have collected on the bottom of your skillet, then dump in about half of the wine to de-glaze.

If your water is boiling, this is a good time to start cooking your pasta. While the pasta cooks, add the chopped kale to the skillet and a little fresher rosemary. Add capers and olives if desired, as well. Cook in the wine until the kale is soft and cooked through, adding more wine or water as needed.

When the pasta is cooked al dente, scoop about half a cup of pasta water out and set aside, then drain the pasta and add to the skillet. Turn the heat up, add in around half of the reserved pasta water, a little more wine, a tablespoon or two of butter. Stir constantly while sprinkling grated cheese into the pan. This is where the magic happens -- the pasta water will combine with the butter, wine and melting cheese to create a creamy, glossy sauce. Continue cooking until the sauce is your desired consistency, adding more liquid or cheese to your tastes. There's really no wrong way to do this! Salt and pepper your pantry pasta before plating. Slice your lemon and spritz your pasta with fresh lemon juice to serve.

AKA Sparrow Grass

Across

1. Order between "ready" and "fire"
4. Milky gems
9. Can. neighbor
10. 1990 Madonna hit
11. Tide type
12. Wear away
13. Leaning
15. Alternatively
16. Spooky
18. Exists
20. Spheres
23. TV, radio, etc.
25. ___ few rounds
26. Used a crowbar
27. Calendar abbr.
28. Flippant
29. ___ publica

Down

1. Surrounding glow
2. Wife of Osiris
3. Syrup flavor
4. Prepared food designation
5. "Merchant of Venice" heroine

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| 18 | 19 | | 20 | | | | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | | 24 | | | | 25 | | |
| 26 | | | | | | 27 | | |
| 28 | | | | | | 29 | | |

6. In the past
7. Form of pachisi
8. Soothsayer
14. Homes for hawks
17. "Pomp and Circumstance" composer
18. Little devils
19. Antitoxins
21. Pained expression
22. Droops
24. Insult, in slang

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

Trivia Teaser – Big and Little

1. Who wrote about her childhood near Pepin, Wisconsin in the 1870s in the novel "Little House in the Big Woods"? a-Louisa May Alcott, b-Laura Ingalls Wilder, c-Willa Cather, d-Helen Keller.

2. Which comic strip character was the subject of the first Big Little Book published in 1932? a-Tarzan, b-Flash Gordon, c-Dick Tracy, d-Lil' Abner.

3. Which actor played the character Jack Crabb, from age 16 to 21, in the 1970 movie western "Little Big Man"? a-Dustin Hoffman, b-Gene Hackman, c-Marlon Brando, d-George Peppard.

4. Which U.S. city is nicknamed "The Biggest Little City in the World"? a-Atlantic City, New Jersey, b-Green Bay, Wisconsin, c-Reno, Nevada, d-Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

5. Which of these actresses did not play a main role on the HBO series "Big Little Lies"? a-Nicole Kidman, b-Reese Witherspoon, c-Meryl Streep, d-Robin Wright.

6. Which woman did Abraham Lincoln refer to as "the little lady who started the big war"? a-Harriet Beecher Stowe, b-Harriet Tubman, c-Clara Barton, d-Julia Grant.

7. In which U.S. state would you find Big Pine Key and Little Torch Key? a-Washington, b-Maine, c-Minnesota, d-Florida.

8. Who was the host of the junior talent TV show "Little Big Shots"? a-Ed Asner, b-Steve Harvey, c-Jeff Dunham, d-Andy Richter.

9. Which 2012 song was the first number one hit for the country group Little Big Town? a-"Redneck Yacht Club," b-"Little Toot," c-"Pontoon," d-"Buy Me a Boat."

10. What was the last name of pro baseball brothers Lloyd and Paul, nicknamed "Little Poison" and "Big Poison"? a-Waner, b-Dean, c-Aaron, d-Wheat.

Prepare for fall drought in spring

Healthy lawns that have been fed four or five times a year will be strong enough to survive up to a couple of months with no water.

Feeding your lawn while we are getting spring rain will strengthen the grass and help it to grow new roots. Use a brand you can trust to feed your lawn with a specially controlled, slow feeding that will work gradually over a couple of months. Follow the directions.

Mow your grass taller. By adjusting your mower to a higher setting, you will encourage the lawn to grow deeper roots to match the increased blade growth. A taller lawn with deeper roots will be able to find moisture and endure hot, dry weather.

Get rid of crabgrass, dandelions, and other aggressive weeds. They steal what little water there is from your grass during dry weeks. The first spring application of weed-and-feed type fertilizer prevents crabgrass. The second application feeds while getting rid of dandelions and other weeds.

If you are able to water your grass, water long enough to get moisture deep into the soil. Lawns need about one inch of water a week. Shallow watering creates shallow roots.

Use a rain gauge to determine how much water you should provide to come up to one inch. That is, if it has rained half an inch during the week, you need to provide the balance, or another half-inch.

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1-b, Laura Ingalls Wilder | 10-a, Waner |
| 2-c, Dick Tracy | 9-c, "Pontoon" |
| 3-a, Dustin Hoffman | 8-b, Steve Harvey |
| 4-c, Reno, Nevada | 7-d, Florida |
| 5-d, Robin Wright | 6-a, Harriet Beecher Stowe |

Answers to 'Big and Little'



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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.

What states will Brood X visit?

Brood X cicadas will emerge in 15 states: Delaware, Illinois, Georgia, Indiana, New York, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Michigan, as well as in Washington D.C.

The next appearance has been predicted to occur in 2038, according to Wikipedia.

Some Brood X emergents were four years early, appearing throughout the brood's range in 2000 and in the Baltimore, Maryland-Washington, D.C., area in May 2017.

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One should always play fairly when one has the winning cards.
~Oscar Wilde

Company names have strange origins

Famed entrepreneur Jeff Bezos had a big idea that needed a big name.

First he came up with Cadabra, which was a play on abracadabra. But a lawyer heard it as cadaver and Bezos thought he shouldn't have a brand that sounded like death. Then they tried relentless. But that sounded mean. However, he bought that domain and you can still get to Amazon typing in relentless.com. Finally he settled on Amazon, which is the world's biggest river and a word that means, well, big.

Cadillac -- Established in 1902, the company was named for the French explorer Antoine Laumet de la Mothe Cadillac, who founded the city of Detroit in 1701.

Google -- Google co-founder Larry Page originally thought of googolplex as a name for his website that would index massive amounts of data. A googolplex is one of the largest describable numbers. He shortened it to googol but made a typo when searching for domains. He typed google instead and he liked it.

Lego -- In 1935, Ole Kirk Kristiansen was looking for a name for his wooden toys. He combined two Danish words meaning play and good -- Leg Godt -- to come up with Lego. Serendipitously, it also means "I put together" in Latin, but Kristiansen didn't know that.

Pepsi-Cola -- Pharmacist Caleb Bradham concocted a drink to aid with digestion, or dyspepsia, and named it Pepsi.

Samsung -- Founder Lee Byung-chull wanted his company to last as long as the stars in the sky. So he named it Three Stars, Samsung, in Korean.

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