

# OutLook

Early Spring 2010

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For the Bay Boomer and Beyond...

*by the Bay*

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Books Alive**

**Alaska**

The Trip of a Lifetime

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# OutLook by the Bay

For the Bay Boomer and Beyond...

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## BAY VIEW - Words From the Desk



**Tecla Emerson Murphy**  
Publisher and Editor-in-Chief

Like many people, we actually gave thought to purchasing a snow blower this winter. We haven't owned one in years, and now we're working very hard at scaling down. A snowblower would be one more piece of *stuff* that needs to be stored and we're trying to lighten our load. We're not exactly successful, but let's just say we're aware of it. On page 10, Peggy is trying to counsel us on discarding and uncluttering by offering suggestions on how to free up space. So far there hasn't been much success in my household, although she has made us acutely aware of it. We're trying, I'll say that much. Now would be the perfect time to get going with it. Spring is so close we can actually smell its scent as it wafts through the window on one of our rare balmy days. We're thinking maybe we might dare to put the snow shovels back in the corner of the shed.

Recently my husband spent the entire day in the basement, emerging in time for dinner. He was loaded down with an empty cardboard box, my favorite mug with the broken handle and a beach chair with a bent frame. He proudly dumped them in the trash and announced that he had cleaned the basement. Poking around a few days later I discovered that most of the clutter had just been moved from one shelf to the next to make it tidier perhaps, but little had been discarded. We do have a problem discarding our treasures. It was over my objection that he threw out the mug with the broken handle, so I'm as guilty as everyone else when it comes to hanging on to antiquated if once useful acquisitions. My friend Joan has a green dress tucked in the dark recesses of her closet that she wore to an event in 1968. Memories prevent her from parting with it even though the style and size is not something she'd ever wear again.

Most all of us are ready to scale down, but how? It's taken us an entire lifetime to accumulate all this *stuff*. It may just be a matter of stopping the acquisitions. On a recent trip to Mexico, a *tendero*, busy laying out his goods for tourists, was heard to say that unlike people in other parts of the world, Americans like to acquire *stuff*, making them good customers. His observation was that people from other countries seem satisfied with what they have. An interesting insight. We Americans all seem to continuously want more. And then when is enough, enough?

Which brings us back to the snowblower. Our friend Ron succumbed and bought one during the first of the February storms. It was probably the last one available, anywhere north of Georgia. But then he still works so perhaps it's on the *need* list. Linda, our ever practical friend, likes to pose this question before making a purchase: Is it a need or a want? Further, where are you going to put it, which is always high on my list of questions.

So for now, with the forsythia ready to burst forth, it's easy to put the snowblower on the *maybe* list. And looking back over this last snowy winter, it was probably a good decision to not buy one. Eventually all that snow did melt and besides, if we bought a snowblower, where would we put it? We need the room in the shed for all the other *stuff*.



Tecla Murphy

# Early Spring <sup>2010</sup>



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**On the Cover:** Mat and Tricia Herban met while getting their Ph.Ds at the University of Pennsylvania. She was impressed that he knew how to cook, making salad dressing from scratch and adding parmesan cheese! They immediately started cooking together and have been at it ever since. After 42 years, they say that a big kitchen is a "must" as they usually are found making different dishes at the same time. Lots of food means lots of guests--to consume it all. And travel provides the spice, encouraging them to try new flavors and providing lots to talk about. But they did have "real" careers as well. Mat is professor emeritus in art history from Ohio State University and Tricia spent more years than she wants to count as a professional fundraiser in Columbus, Ohio. They moved to Annapolis in 1997.

# Letters to the Editor:

Please address your letters to: [editor@OutLookbytheBay.com](mailto:editor@OutLookbytheBay.com)



### Taking a Blueberry Break

I enjoyed your article in OutLook by the Bay and the fun memory it called up of a visit in August 1994 to Lubec, Maine. In the first of my two weeks there I was told of their wonderful little library, and promptly went off to visit it. When I found the library cottage there was a note on the door saying something along the line of, "Gone to rake blueberries--back next week. If you need something, So-and-So has the key. If the window box flowers are wilted, use the hose around on the side to water them." I returned the following week, as did the librarian, and we had a delightful visit.

I, too, have enjoyed stopping in other folks' libraries when traveling. And after reading your article, I will be more deliberate in searching them out.

~ S. Birdsong  
Maryland



### Ratatouille on Target

Thank you so much for making "OutLook by the Bay" available to so many. I am truly enjoying reading the many articles and features. Actually, I will be making the Ratatouille this weekend. I thought that you'd like to know that the list of ingredients does not mention green and red peppers. Thinking that I had everything that I needed, I then read the directions: Oops! Fortunately, I do have some peppers in the house. The weather is perfect for this type of dish.

~ Tullia H.  
York, PA

### Visiting China

Very much enjoyed the article on China... and glad you shared that amazing trip in the editorial about picking up your granddaughter.

~ Pat J.  
Evergreen, CO

### Correction

The article, "Open Me First" A Roth IRA, appearing in the Winter 2010 edition contains an error. The article says "The big news here is that in 2010, the income restrictions on Roth IRA contributions go away. This means that regardless of your income, you may make maximum contributions to a Roth IRA." This is incorrect. Income restrictions still apply to Roth IRA contributions. They have changed for conversions to Roth IRAs, as pointed out in the rest of the article.



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ES/10

# The Most Overlooked Tax Deductions

By Melissa Conroy



**A**lthough there are some intrepid souls out there who try all sorts of creative ways of saving on their taxes (Tip: The purchase of a Jet Ski cannot be deducted as a travel expense.), it is quite common for people to overpay when it comes to figuring out what they owe Uncle Sam. There are several tax deductions that are frequently overlooked when tax time arrives. Check the list below to see if you have been missing some of these very commonly overlooked deductions.

## "Greening" your home

Improvements that you make to increase the energy efficiency of your home are often tax deductible. Such things as biomass stoves, heat pumps, skylights, high-efficiency furnaces and natural gas or propane furnaces are some of the home improvement expenditures on which you can take tax credits.

## Jury pay

Some businesses require their employees to turn over their jury pay to the company if the employees receive full salary while serving on a jury. If your company does this, you not only don't get to keep the extra income you earned while doing your civic duty, but you are required to report that salary on your taxes. Never fear: This amount is tax deductible!

## Charity transportation

Those vehicle miles that you burn getting to your local charity event or volunteer organization are deductible. Also, if you drive for charity, such as picking people up or running errands, this can be deducted too. Keep track of your mileage for your humanitarian activities and deduct it.

## Work shipment

If your job demands a lot of travel, chances are you have to lug a laptop, files and other items with you. Shipping and baggage costs for your work documents and equipment are write-offs for your miscellaneous deductions, so keep your baggage and shipment receipts.

## Work costs

Out-of-pocket costs related to your job may be deductible if you were not reimbursed for them. If you have to purchase a uniform, pay union dues, pursue more education, pay for travel costs, or use your vehicle as part of your job, keep track of these costs. You can deduct them.

## Medical costs

If your medical expenses total more than 7.5 percent of your adjusted gross income, they are deductible. Costs such as hearing aids, prescription lenses and medical equipment can rack up, so keep those receipts. Keep in mind, however, that the IRS pays close attention to medical deductions, and you will need to itemize.

## Moving

You found a great job in this poor economy! Good for you. It's even better if it necessitates a move because your moving expenses may be deductible. There are certain requirements such as you can't have been reimbursed by your employer for your moving costs. Allowable deductions may surprise you. Example: If the move requires that you ship your pet to your new home, this shipment expense counts as a deduction.

## Addiction recovery programs

Anyone who has battled to overcome an addiction may take a small amount of comfort in knowing that the treatment cost is often a deductible. Drug and alcohol abuse program costs are deductible, as are some smoking cessation programs.

## Tax preparation fees

If you hand over a hefty chunk of money each year to a kind soul who struggles over your W-2 on your behalf, know that this fee is deductible. Make sure your tax preparer knows this too and factors it into your 2009 taxes.

## Gambling losses

If you like to hit up the slot machines in your spare time, you will be thrilled to know that you can deduct your gambling losses to the extent of your winnings. Keep a record of your gambling activity.

These are some of the commonly overlooked tax deductions, but there are more out there. When it comes to preparing your taxes every year, it is very possible that you are giving the government more than its due.

Make 2010 the year you get creative, do some research, and look at all the ways you could be cutting back on the taxes you pay. For the upcoming year, save your business shipment receipts, record your gambling losses and winnings, and consider installing a heat pump or propane furnace. You could save quite a bit with careful bookkeeping and a little knowledge about just how many tax deductions the IRS allows. 

# It's Good to Feel Like This Nut

By Leah Lancione



If “sometimes you feel like a nut” hopefully your craving is for walnuts. You may be pleasantly surprised to find out that your hankering for something crunchy and delicious can be fulfilled by this healthy choice. This favorite ice cream sundae topping or cookie ingredient has been deemed a super food of sorts after years of case studies. The list of walnuts' nutritional benefits is extensive, including fighting heart disease, guarding against allergies and asthma, protecting bone health and preventing cancer. Walnuts contain a high concentration of omega-3 fats, as well as alpha linolenic acid, manganese, copper and ellagic acid, to name a few healthy components. The nutritional features of walnuts have earned them the superlative labels, “heart-healthy” and “brain food.” Here's the rundown:

## Heart Health

The polyunsaturated fat in alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), an essential plant-based omega-3 found in walnuts, enhances artery function by preventing cholesterol plaques from building up. The American Dietary Association asserts that omega-3s help prevent arteries from hardening, lower levels of triglycerides and reduce blood pressure. Experts have also noted that the plant sterols in walnuts also keep the body from absorbing cholesterol. So, instead of grabbing chips for a mid-day snack, why not grab a handful of walnuts?

The nutritional features of walnuts have earned them the superlative labels, “heart-healthy” and “brain food.”

## Bone Health

Alpha-linolenic acid also benefits the skeletal system because it reduces the breakdown of bones. A study at Penn State University determined that people who consumed a diet that included daily portions (four or five a day) of walnuts had better bone health than those who did not.

## Asthma and Allergies

David Grotto, R.D., author of *101 Foods that Could Save Your Life*, says that a diet full of omega-3-rich foods as opposed to omega-6-rich foods (red meat and partially hydrogenated oils) may curb the symptoms of asthma and allergies. The anti-inflammatory attributes are not only helpful in asthma but in rheumatoid arthritis.

## Cancer Prevention/Antioxidant Defenses

Research has also shown that the antioxidant compound ellagic acid in walnuts protects cells from free radicals and actually detoxifies cancer-causing substances and prevents cancer cells from multiplying. Also, there are important enzymes in the minerals copper and manganese that are found in walnuts that neutralize free radicals.

## Cognitive Function

Some experts claim the omega-3 in walnuts improves cognitive function, and actually call walnuts “brain food” because of its wrinkled texture and role in helping brain cells function properly.

The list of healthy side effects of a diet sprinkled with walnuts is even more considerable since they also contain vitamin E, fiber, potassium and protein.

The greatest news is that it's easy to incorporate walnuts into your diet: The USDA, among others, recommends a Waldorf salad with its basic ingredients of apples, celery and walnuts. Or you can try topping a winter fruit pie or spice cake with walnut crumbs. You can make a dressing heartier by adding walnuts. Additionally, whole wheat or bran muffins with raisins and walnuts could be scrumptious. Then try substituting walnuts for cashews in a stir fry with veggies and brown rice for a nutritious and exotic dinner. You'd be nutty to ignore all the healthy recipes that include walnuts found at [www.walnutrecipes.net](http://www.walnutrecipes.net) For more information on walnuts, visit [www.walnutsworld.com](http://www.walnutsworld.com) and [www.walnuts.org](http://www.walnuts.org) or Google “health benefits of walnuts” and you'll see for yourself that it's good to go nuts for walnuts! Just remember, you only need as few as five a day to get the necessary daily supply of the good-for-you essential fatty acids that walnuts contain.

# Pursuing Your Passion

By Kathryn Marchi

It has been said that talent is “a gift on loan from God.” When children discover that they have a special talent for art, sports or music, they simply enjoy any opportunity to pursue it. Parents get in on the act as well, and lessons or special coaching ensue. Ample opportunities to display this ability sometimes continues throughout schooling – sometimes to the university level. However, that “special talent” may not be a profitable way to make a living! And so it has to take a back seat to finding the right career choice. Full-time studies in college or at an entry-level job naturally take precedence. That doesn't leave much time for anything else, but it usually doesn't stay that way!

Peter De Vries is a very good example of a talented individual who chose an entirely different career path from his special art talent. He became a Naval officer.

Pete loved drawing and painting from early childhood. His parents, noting his creative ability with crayons, decided to send their nine-year-old son to art camp one summer to “keep him out of trouble.” This was the beginning of Pete's love of art. Over the years, he took more lessons and joined various art clubs .

In 1969, Pete graduated from the United States Naval Academy with a degree in oceanography. For 15 years, he was a carrier pilot involved in anti-submarine warfare. He was then tasked with guarding harbors and piers by training dolphins in anti-swimmer defense and in the location and recovery of underwater mines. When time allowed, Pete painted and sketched wherever he was stationed. Naturally, much of his subject matter had to do with the sea and ships.



**“Pete’s passion for art is now beginning to develop into not only a hobby, but also a small business.”**

After retirement from the Navy, Pete and wife, Barbara, moved to Florida where Pete had taken a job with the state and eventually became a home builder. That environment gave him the time and more opportunity to paint seascapes and tropical scenes.

Returning to Annapolis following Pete's “second retirement,” he and his wife settled in Edgewater. The house they chose had great light from its many windows, allowing Pete to set up his easel and begin serious painting. He could “pursue his passion” for painting and bring his love of ships and the sea into his home and on its walls. His water colors became known among friends and family and soon he was involved in local arts and crafts shows. Pete joined the Annapolis Water Color Club and was asked to donate two of his paintings to a Naval Academy 40th reunion for its silent auction. They both sold quite nicely and Pete was very pleased. This gave him encouragement to enter four local, nonjuried art shows. Recently Pete entered a painting with the Maryland Federation of Art for a national juried show to be held in March.

Pete's passion for art is now beginning to develop into not only a hobby, but also a small business. He is now developing his own Web site and business cards. Some of his artwork graces the front of note cards

and Christmas cards. Recently at a bridge party in his home, a guest admired a water color of a tall ship that Pete had painted. This guest was thrilled and surprised when Pete gave it to her! She now has an original Peter De Vries” water color on her family room wall.

When asked how he chooses the subjects of his paintings, Pete explains that his work is “nature based.” He is partial to seascapes and ships but he also enjoys painting landscapes. Summing up his artwork, Pete states that he has a “tremendous feeling of accomplishment” when he is able to see his “mind's eye transformed onto paper.” He laughingly refers to a bottle of champagne he keeps on ice to be opened after his first bonified private sale.

How wonderful it is to be able to pursue one's passion on a full-time basis and even make a business of it. Pete De Vries never gave up on his art, although raising a family and managing two busy careers sometimes limited the time he could spend on it.

We can all take a lesson from Pete. With renewed energy and insight, we can now begin pursuing our own passion for a particular hobby or talent. Time is on our side. Pete can be reached at [pbdevries@verizon.net](mailto:pbdevries@verizon.net) 

# The Decade in Review

*A look at stocks, commodities and memories*

## A turbulent 10 years

The 2000s gave us remarkable opportunity and remarkable volatility. They tested our patience and many investment strategies. They taught us to hold on, hang in there and diversify.

### Stocks

Was it really a “lost decade?” It depends on how you were invested. Yes, the Dow ended the 1990s at 11,497.12 and ended the 2000s at 10,428.05, amounting to a 9.30 percent slip. The S&P 500 lost 24.10 percent in the same interval. If you invested a lump sum into an index fund tracking the S&P 500 on Dec. 31, 1999, and left those assets untouched for 10 years, you would have ended up with a sizable loss.<sup>1,2</sup>

Well, that sounds dismal, but how many of us actually invest this way? Very few of us make one lump sum investment and just watch it for 10 years. Thanks to diversification, rebalancing and constant inflows of new money, quite a few investors were able to grow their assets and/or outperform the S&P 500 in the past decade.

The fact is, five sectors of the S&P 500 gained 10 percent or more across the 2000s – health care (+10.85 percent), utilities (+10.92 percent), materials (+24.91 percent), consumer staples (+31.84 percent) and energy (+102.12 percent).<sup>2</sup>

Few articles about the “lost decade” mention this notable factoid: The Russell 2000 advanced 23.90 percent during the 2000s.<sup>2</sup> Mutual funds that focused on buying undervalued small-company stocks gained an average of 8.3 percent annually in the 2000s.<sup>3</sup>

Outside America, developing stock markets shattered all expectations while the developed markets mirrored American performance. Look at the decade-long gains in key indices in some of the BRIC nations, as measured by CNBC.com: China, +72 percent, India, +249 percent, Brazil, +301 percent and Russia, +863 percent. Compare all that with the benchmark indices in Japan (-44 percent), France (-34 percent), Great Britain (-22 percent) and Germany (-14 percent) in the past decade.<sup>4</sup> Emerging market mutual funds gained an average of 9.3 percent per year in the last 10 years.<sup>3</sup>



*Provided by Gorman Financial Services, Inc.*

### Commodities

It was a decade of amazing gains in the broad commodities market. From the end of 1999 to the end of 2009, gold advanced 278.52 percent. How about silver and copper? Silver gained 208.91 percent and king copper rose 287.78 percent. Crude oil rose 210 percent during the 2000s.<sup>2</sup>

How great a decade was it for the commodities sector? Only one notable commodity posted a 10-year loss from Dec. 31, 1999, to Dec. 31, 2009. That was palladium, which retreated 8.98 percent. On the other hand, we know that 16 commodities gained 100 percent or more across the decade.<sup>2</sup>

The two biggest gainers during the 2000s were a pair of crops: sugar (+340.36 percent) and cocoa (+293.31 percent).<sup>2</sup>

### Highs and lows

We are 10 years past the bursting of the tech bubble. March 10 will mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NASDAQ's all-time high of 5,132.50.<sup>5</sup> And, of course, a decade-defining geopolitical event rocked the markets 18 months later.

General Motors and Chrysler filed for bankruptcy protection in 2009; at the start of the decade, so did Enron, the company that *Fortune Magazine* ranked as “most innovative” each year from 1995-2000.<sup>6</sup> In 2008, Lehman Brothers, Morgan Stanley, Goldman Sachs, Merrill Lynch and Washington Mutual either folded, mutated or were bought up while AIG, Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae were bailed out.

The Dow hit a new high of 11,723 in January 2000, a post-9/11 closing low of 7,286 in October 2002, and then ended 2003 at 10,453 (as the DJIA gained 25.32 percent that year while the dollar lost 14.67 percent). The Dow hit new peaks of 11,727 on Oct. 3, 2006, and 14,164 on Oct. 9, 2007. A close of 11,215 on July 2, 2008, officially marked the start of a bear market.<sup>7</sup>

From March 9, 2009, closing lows to the end of the year, the Dow shot up 59.28 percent and the S&P 500 advanced 64.83

percent.<sup>2</sup> This led some to entertain tantalizing thoughts about the birth of a new bull market. Or was it simply a cyclical bull in a secular bear? The jury is still out, as the saying goes, we can hope for the best.

### What did we learn?

The 2000s taught us lessons about irrational exuberance (companies that had never made a dime were probably not worth billions) and lessons about the value of diversifying your portfolio. We also learned lessons in perseverance – those who stayed invested have seen their portfolios make a strong recovery.

The 2000s put investors through some seemingly unimaginable financial headlines. It was a rare decade, an aberrant one in stock market history. For example, the Dow hadn't had a negative decade since the 1930s, and it had advanced 228.25 percent over the 1980s and 317.59 percent for the 1990s.<sup>8</sup> Will we see it make a double- or triple-digit advance in the next 10 years? We don't know. Past performance is no indicator of future success. Yet the awesome potential of the stock market and commodities markets should not be dismissed. And with economies healing the world over, it is clearly time to look forward and stay invested.

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*These are the views of Peter Montoya Inc., not the named representative nor broker/dealer, and should not be construed as investment advice. Neither the named representative or broker/dealer gives tax or legal advice. Please consult a qualified financial planner.*

### Citations

<sup>1</sup> [money.cnn.com/quote/historical/historical.html?pg=hi&close\\_date=12%2F31%2F99&mode=add&symb=DJIA](http://money.cnn.com/quote/historical/historical.html?pg=hi&close_date=12%2F31%2F99&mode=add&symb=DJIA) [1/16/09]

<sup>2</sup> [cnbc.com/id/34645043](http://cnbc.com/id/34645043) [12/31/09]

<sup>3</sup> [articles.latimes.com/2009/dec/31/business/la-fi-stocks31-2009dec31?pg=3](http://articles.latimes.com/2009/dec/31/business/la-fi-stocks31-2009dec31?pg=3) [12/31/09]

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<sup>7</sup> [the-privateer.com/chart/dow-long.html](http://the-privateer.com/chart/dow-long.html) [12/31/09]

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**".... open seating is the name of the game and you decide when and where you would like to dine by just showing up."**

## Freestyle Cruisin' for the Savvy Traveler

By Penelope Folsom



Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) is offering a whole new way to travel, and they're calling it "freestyle." Many cruisers are choosing the informality of this innovative concept. This could well be one of the travel industry's best-kept secrets with many veteran cruisers still not familiar with this more relaxed way to cruise. In 2001 the M/S Norwegian Star was specifically built for freestyle cruising while their other ships have been adapted to fit this new concept. Other cruise lines have been marketing a similar version of the *freestyle* concept, but according to passengers who have sampled both, NCL has it mastered. It covers dining, attire, service, entertainment, activities and even disembarkation - the bane of every savvy cruiser's existence.

Their innovative dining concept allows passengers to eat at whatever hour they choose and select their own dining companions as opposed to assigned seating and times. Passengers can choose to dine alone or share a table with other travelers. Ocean liners in days gone by had a clearly defined class structure and along with that, certain specific rules as to when and where and with whom passengers would dine. We were all required to choose one of two specific hours when we would like to dine and were then assigned a table as well as being assigned our dinner companions who were often interesting. But what if you found your assigned companions less than fascinating or you changed your mind about your preferred dinner hour? It was difficult to change mid-cruise to something more suitable. Now, open seating is the name of the

game and you decide when and where you would like to dine by just showing up. There are more than enough choices in dining areas, which are included in the cost of passage, with no additional charge. Room service is also available 24/7 with no charge.

With so many choices, and no waiting in line, there's really no need to seek out a meal at a different venue. However, should you decide to upgrade your dining experience, there are nearly a dozen specialty restaurants that have offerings such as Tex-Mex, Asian or French cuisine for an additional cost of \$10 to \$25 per person. The food tends to be exceptional no matter what you choose, but sometimes on a longer cruise, it's fun to seek out one of the specialty restaurants. Interestingly, dress guidelines have been relaxed to "cruise casual," which is defined as just about anything other than bathing suits or shorts during the dinner hour. One fun night the cruise offered a theme - *dress up/or not!* We chose *or not* but others came decked in diamonds and swishy evening attire. They were happy and we were happy and somehow it all blended so nicely.

The service was excellent, and the cost of passage on any of NCL "freestyle" ships is comparable to the other cruise lines with similar destinations such as Alaska, Bermuda, the Panama Canal, Europe or any of the Caribbean destinations. One thing is for sure, you will never go hungry on a cruise ship. There's something for everyone.

For more information go to [www.NCL.com](http://www.NCL.com) 



# Spring Cleaning? Time to Rethink, Recycle, Reuse

By Peggy Markham

Old man winter has left town... it must be time to think of *spring cleaning*. This year when you begin your annual task take a new approach and *rethink* what you will do with all the stuff that will be cleared out of closets, the basement, attic, garage and other nooks and crannies around the house. You will be amazed at the things you can *recycle* and *reuse*.

As you clean and pile up *stuff*, you need to think of your discards in terms of: Is it a *recycle* item or a *reuse* item? The two terms are very different and the difference gives you a choice of how to dispose of unwanted accumulations.

## Reuse

*Reuse* means extending the life of an item, using it in another way after the primary use is finished. If you don't reuse the item, the environmental benefit comes from passing it along for someone else to use. Many of the possessions we no longer need can be put to further use and with a little rethinking, we can reduce the excess trash in landfills. Let's look at some innovative ideas for *reuse*.

• **Charities:** Donations of clothing, furniture, computers, eye glasses, bedding and other household items are welcome resources for charities, shelters, thrift shops and nonprofit organizations. Goodwill, the Salvation Army and similar groups maintain

pickup sites in communities. The Vietnam Veterans of America will collect clothing and household goods at your front door (very convenient) and these items go to benefit veterans and their families. You can even schedule a pickup online at [www.vva.org](http://www.vva.org) and [www.pickupplease.org](http://www.pickupplease.org) Animal shelters always welcome used pet equipment such as bedding, feeding dishes, litter boxes and crates. Keep your receipts to claim a charitable write-off.

• **Eyewear, reading glasses:** Your local ophthalmologist, optician or optometrist may have a collection box for used glasses. Old eyeglasses can be cleaned, repaired and the prescription analyzed and catalogued in a database then distributed and donated to underprivileged people. Contact Medical Ministry International and retail stores like LensCrafters, For-Eyes, Pearle Vision or contact the Lions Club

[www.lionnet.com/sight](http://www.lionnet.com/sight) If your prescription has not changed too much, consider having a pair of sunglasses made from your glasses.

• **Old Bras:** Who would have thought to reuse this article of clothing? "Oz" du Soleil is an organization that collects and distributes bras for women in financial trouble or inmates released from prison. You can send your old bras to Oz du Soleil, Support 1000, PO Box 412406, Chicago, IL 60641 see

[www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/11/25/donating-bras-to-women-in\\_n\\_370971.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/11/25/donating-bras-to-women-in_n_370971.html)

• **Cell Phones:** Contact your local retail outlet for your cell phone carrier (Verizon, Sprint and others) and ask them if they will take your old phone. Many will accept the phones, empty the phone of your information and reprogram the phones. The cell phones can then be donated to battered women, soldiers and families in need. Do not throw your old cell phone away in the trash, these phones contain toxic materials.

• **Packaging materials:** When you ship packages, reuse the packing peanuts and other packaging materials. Shredded paper also works well in packages. If you don't want to keep or store the peanuts, you can take them to your local shipping stores. Try to reuse recyclable peanuts made from water soluble vegetable starch as the standard Styrofoam peanuts do not have any recycling value.

• **Winter coats:** Local dry cleaners often hold drives to collect used winter jackets and coats that are then cleaned and donated to those in need.

• **Personal Reuse:**

- Put your old clothes in a box or trunk and let your grandchildren play dress-up or use for Halloween or drama costumes.

- Cut used T-shirts and other soft clothes into pieces for dust rags.

- Many quilters sew old denim jeans, wool, flannel, cotton clothes into new quilts.

- Crafters make beautiful purses from felt, using old woolen sweaters.

- Line a grill or the bottom of your oven with worn cookie trays.

- Use 35 mm film canisters to store quarters for road tolls and coin-operated laundry.

- Empty breath mint tins are perfect places to keep buttons, pins, paper clips, hair pins and coins.

- Turn glass jars into clever plant containers (you can decorate them with china paint). Use empty oil and vinegar bottles to fill with your own homemade oils and vinegars (add some fresh herbs from your garden for a "gourmet" look and taste). Fill clean jars with homemade jams and jellies, sealed with melted paraffin.

- Make a backyard swing out of an old tire.

- Take your glass or plastic containers to the grocery store and refill with bulk food. Have the merchant weigh your container before you fill it.

- If you host a party, ask guests to bring good used clothing, blankets, household items as their gift and you can then donate the goods to local thrift stores, charities, homeless shelters churches and shelters for battered women and children.

*The rest of our tomorrows are a gift. Don't waste them.*

## Recycle

When you *recycle* you are carefully disposing of waste materials that can be turned into marketable products. The standard recyclables are newspapers, cardboard, glass, aluminum and certain plastics that are placed in authorized recycle bins or on the curb for waste management services to retrieve. These products are then sent to legitimate companies who sort the materials and eventually the cast-offs show up as entirely new items. You probably buy and use many of these things without even realizing the you have purchased a recycled product. Examples are blankets, rugs, door mats, razors, toothbrushes, sweaters, furniture, dishes, park benches, shoes, carpets, stationery and magazines. As you look at your pile of throw-aways the following things are ideal for recycling:

- **Glass:** household glass jars or bottles, old vases, beverage glasses, mugs and dishes. Rinse out the glass before putting in the recycle bins.
- **Corrugated cardboard:** shipping boxes, packaging boxes used for large items like TVs or computers. Do not include thin cardboard like that used for cereal or pasta packaging.
- **Newspapers:** standard newspapers, glossy junk mail and catalogs.
- **Aluminum and cans:** soda cans and vegetable cans. (Be considerate and rinse out the cans).

- **Plastic containers:** Look for the recycle number on the bottom of plastic containers. Each community's waste service has a different standard for acceptance. Usually numbers 1, 2 and 6 can be recycled, but you should check your local requirements. Remember to rinse out used containers.
- **Contact companies that recycle:** Preserve is a leading maker of 100 percent recycled household consumer goods. The company has a "Preserve's Gimme 5 Program" that will transform No. 5 polypropylene plastics (yogurt containers and other food storage containers) into new products. Preserve will recycle each collected Brita plastic filter casing into Preserve's eco-friendly, 100 percent recycled products such as toothbrushes, cups, razors and cutting boards. All Preserve products are also recyclable, giving items like the Brita filter materials a third life. They can transform yogurt cups into toothbrushes and razors and turn take-out containers into cutting boards. The company offers consumers a way to return No.5 plastics for recycling. Contact: [www.preserveproducts.com](http://www.preserveproducts.com)

This spring you can be a champion for the environment by reusing and recycling. You will be extending the life of used materials instead of filling up landfills and adding to garbage heaps. Your trash is someone else's treasure and once remade, you might not even know that you just bought a new doormat made from those old flip flops you tossed into the recycle bin. *Rethink, reuse, recycle!* 

Peggy can be reached at [markham.dp@gmail.com](mailto:markham.dp@gmail.com)

**"This spring you can be a champion  
for the environment by reusing  
and recycling."**



### OutLook's *Bits & Bytes*

Laughter really is the best medicine. Recent studies have shown that stress-reducing laughter can extend your life and the health of your heart. Try just a few a day and see if you don't feel better.



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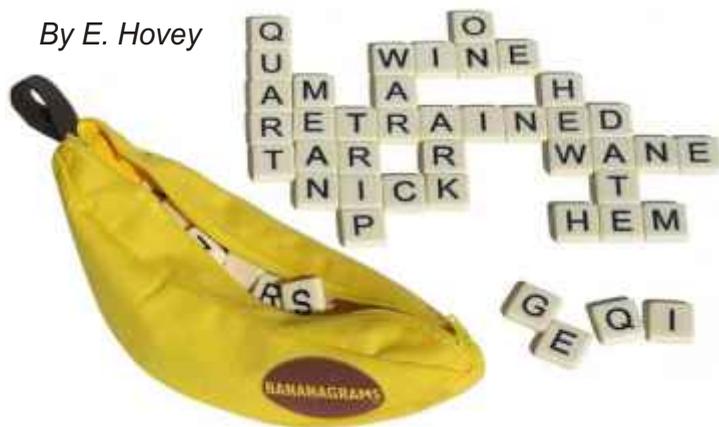
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# Bananagrams

By E. Hovey



There isn't a more entertaining way that we can think of to keep those brain synapses in peak condition than playing games – and we don't mean solitaire! As you've no doubt read, recent studies have shown that an active brain will survive longer and stay sharper than one that slips into nothingness as it focuses on evening television. So join us in our new column as we share in the fun and excitement of discovering new or underappreciated board games.

This month we've got our gaming experts playing Bananagrams. In fact we've had trouble getting them away from the game table. One trio of inveterate sailors: Ron, Rich and John, were actually seen carrying their Bananagrams game into Mystic Pizza in a town of the same name on a rainy day last summer. The game was safely tucked into a pocket of a nor'easter. Over pizza and beer they played game after game trying to outbest the last winner. Caution is advised with this game; it can become addictive.

To play: Between 16 and 24 of the square tiles are taken facedown by each player. The number of tiles depends on number of players. Each player turns over the tiles and attempts to use all of them, creating a set of connected words, much like a crossword. When a player uses all of his tiles, he says "peel" and each player takes another tile. This continues until all tiles from the common pile have been taken, at which point the first player to use all of his tiles says "bananas." He is then declared the winner, but only if all of the words are spelled correctly. Part of the fun is discovering how many words we misspell in the heat of the moment. This can provide a few laughs as most of us are guilty of a few misspellings.

This is a game that can be played with your contemporaries or with kids. One teenage grandson was recently heard remarking on how he was fond of it because there are no rules. Well, not exactly. Each player does act independently in forming his own combination of words, going at his own pace and without having to take turns. And there's an added bonus. Players are allowed to exchange a difficult letter with the slight penalty of taking three additional tiles. With luck, an opponent will have to come up with a creative way to use the "Q" or the "X."

Bananagrams offers endless hours of fun, takes up little space, is easily transportable and just might drive you bananas trying to beat the competition.



Available: Barnes & Noble, Borders, Amazon and Toys R Us  
 Cost: \$14 for 144 pieces  
 \$24 for 298 pieces

For more information: [www.bananagrams-intl.com](http://www.bananagrams-intl.com)

# Tips if You Want to "Lose a Little"

By Leah Lancione

For many people losing weight isn't just about wanting to look and feel great, but a necessary health decision based on doctor's orders. Although there's no magic pill or sure fire method that's right for everyone, there are a few ways prescribed by diet and exercise experts that are sensible. The following are steps you can take to get on the right track:

**Control portion sizes.** Renowned fitness guru Denise Austin advises people to use bowls or other tools to measure the portions on your plate for each meal or snack. When you're eating out, make it a point to not clean your plate; you're allowed to take home a "doggy bag" for a meal tomorrow. You can also split your entree with a friend or spouse to cut calories and fat and still enjoy a restaurant-quality meal. Visit [www.webmd.com/diet/healthtool-portion-size-plate](http://www.webmd.com/diet/healthtool-portion-size-plate) to discover the portion sizes for foods by category.

**Snack Wisely.** Choose low-fat, low-calorie snacks that are also nutritious. Think of almonds or walnuts, plain, all-natural popcorn sans butter or salt; salsa and baked tortilla chips; fruit smoothies with low-cal/ low-fat yogurt; hummus and carrot and celery sticks, apples and peanut butter (Jif claims to have a version with omega-3s), almond, or soy nut butter; or dried fruit (just check for no added sugar). Virtually every food item has a low-calorie or low-fat version. And while you're at it, ditch the soda for green tea, 100 percent fruit juice, or the best choice—water. To jazz up water add a couple of cucumbers or limes to a pitcher for a invigorating thirst-quencher.

**Drink lots of water.** Drinking water, at least 8 to 10 glasses a day, not only helps your body metabolize fat, it keeps you hydrated. Also, drinking water before a meal can help prevent you from overeating since it tends to make your stomach feel fuller. To calculate how much water you should drink based on your weight and activity level, visit [www.calculatorlive.com/Daily-Water-Intake-Calculator.aspx](http://www.calculatorlive.com/Daily-Water-Intake-Calculator.aspx)

**Exercise every day.** Try to exercise at least 30 minutes a day, but even a few minutes count. Park your car at the end of the parking lot at work or when shopping so you have to walk farther to your destination. Instead of taking the elevator at the mall, opt for the stairs or walk up the escalator. Also try to mix up your routine by walking a few days a week and on the other days dancing or doing strength training. Mixing up your workout regime keeps your body from hitting a plateau.

Remember, the goal is to burn more calories than you consume. Without getting too fanatical, visit [www.thecaloriecounter.com/](http://www.thecaloriecounter.com/) to search the database of foods and their caloric content. Then zip over to [www.healthstatus.com/calculate/cbc](http://www.healthstatus.com/calculate/cbc) to find out how many calories are burned during your favorite activities. So, the secret is, it's all about balance; make a plan to balance your caloric intake with exercise. As the song "Wonder of Love" advises, "You've got to win a little, lose a little..." The same goes for maintaining a healthy life style: You've got to eat a little, exercise a little, relax a little—everything in moderation.

*Think of the possibilities and let that be your guide.*



**Great Ideas for Leftovers**

**S**crumbling for ideas about what to do with that leftover holiday ham?

Try it in soups, casseroles and side dishes that transform leftovers to bold new dishes. It's challenging to transform this ham that has been decked out, studded with cloves, slathered with pineapple preserves and brown sugar and now stands, boneless and covered in plastic wrap. Look what we have for you.

# Too Much Easter Ham? *By Lesley Younes*

**Asparagus and Ham Casserole**

- 2 slices white bread, torn into small pieces
- 3 Tbs. cheddar cheese, shredded
- 3 cups uncooked egg noodles
- 3 cups chopped asparagus
- 1/4 cup flour
- pinch thyme
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh dill
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1 Tbs. butter
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 1/2 cup leftover ham, cubed

Heat oven to 450. Cook the noodles as directed on the packet. Mix them with the asparagus, ham and dill. Gently cook the onions in the butter, add the thyme and the flour, slowly add the milk and chicken stock, stirring with a whisk to ensure a smooth sauce. Add the noodle mixture to this and pour into a casserole dish. Sprinkle with the bread and cheese. Cook in the oven until brown and bubbly, about 12 minutes. Serves 8.

**Ham and Swiss-Loaded Potatoes**

- 4 oven-cooked baking potatoes, halved and scooped
- 1 cup left over ham, cubed
- 1 cup shredded Swiss cheese
- 1/2 cup chopped green onions
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- black pepper and salt to taste

Mash the cooked potato, reserving the skin. Rub the outside of the skin with a little salt and oil. Add the remaining ingredients to the cooked potato. Refill the shell and place in the oven at 450 until the filling is hot and the top is golden brown, about 10 minutes. Serves 4-8.

**Vegetable and Ham Soup**

- 3 slices bacon, chopped
- 1 leek, bulb only, cleaned well and thinly sliced
- 2 stalks celery, finely sliced
- 3 cloves garlic, finely sliced
- 2 Tbs. fresh rosemary, chopped
- 3 carrots, peeled and chopped
- 5 cups vegetable broth, more if necessary
- 2 cups cabbage, finely chopped
- 2 cups cubed leftover ham
- 1 Tbs. Balsamic vinegar

Render the bacon until crisp and the fat has been released. Remove the bacon and set aside. Add the leeks, celery, garlic, carrots

and cabbage to the bacon fat and stir to coat. Over low heat, sweat the vegetables until they are just wilted. Add the ham, the cooked bacon, rosemary and the stock. At this point you may need a little more. Check for seasoning and then drizzle up to one tablespoon of Balsamic vinegar into the soup. You may wish to thicken this slightly, or as an alternative, you may add a little cooked brown rice. Serves 6.

**Ham and Swiss Bread Pudding**

- 1 cup chopped green onions
- 3/4 cup leftover ham, cubed
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 7 slices sweet bread, such as Hawaiian
- 1 3/4 cups milk
- 3 large eggs
- 2 Tbs. Dijon mustard
- salt and pepper to taste
- 3/4 cup shredded Gruyere cheese

Set oven to 350. Chop bread into cubes and bake for 15 minutes until crisp. In the meantime, mix the ham, green onions, garlic, eggs, milk, mustard and seasonings together and place in an oven-proof casserole. Place the bread and cheese on top and bake at 350 for 25 minutes, or until the dish has set and is golden. Serves 6.





# Alaska, the Trip of a Lifetime

By Kathryn Marchi

**A**laska is not a foreign country, although you may think so after visiting the 49<sup>th</sup> state. To find out why people come back in awe of the state's splendor, it's probably best to take advantage of one of the land and cruise packages available. Seasoned travelers often prefer to take the land portion of the trip and then the cruise. One reason is ease of baggage handling. Only two bags are allowed: one is reserved for the cruise and picked up right away while the other bag stays with the traveler throughout the trip.

## LAND TOUR

The six-day land portion of the trip starts in Fairbanks, with stops south to Denali, McKinley/Talkeetna, and then on to Whittier where the ship awaits. The cruise portion will then continue the journey for seven days along the Gulf of Alaska to College Fjord, Glacier Bay and the Inside Passage to Skagway, Juneau and Ketchikan.

**FAIRBANKS**, population 30,000, is the second largest city in Alaska. Founded in 1901 as a trading post, Fairbanks became the site of the gold rush in 1903. Its climate is sub-Arctic and has the most extreme and variable weather in the world. Three of our favorite tours:

### The Sternwheeler Riverboat

**Discovery Tour** is a four-hour trip on the Chena River. The highlight is seeing the champion sled dogs at the kennels of the late Susan Butcher, four-time winner of the 1,100-mile Iditarod Race. A typical native Athabascan Indian village is also there and worth a visit.

**The El Dorado Gold Mine Tour** allows the visitor to actually pan for gold at the working sluice boxes. Gold is heavy enough to stay in the bottom of the pan as water and pebbles are swished away. It's nearly guaranteed that everyone will find gold fragments, which can be put into lockets available on the site.

**The Alaska Pipeline**, constructed in 1970, is featured with Fairbanks actually being the midpoint of the line.

### PRINCESS RAIL TRIP

After Fairbanks, a double-tiered, domed train is boarded for the 4 ½-hour ride to Denali. Snowcapped mountain range views are magnificent. You also see wetlands and flat land where "permafrost" stunts the growth of old evergreen trees.

**DENALI**, where lodging is located near the entrance to Denali National Park and Preserve, is an area created in 1917 as McKinley National Park, and consists of more than six million acres. The mountain range containing Mt. McKinley, the highest peak in the United States, stands 20,320 feet above sea level. In 1980, it was renamed "Denali," an Indian word for "high one."

The area is breathtakingly beautiful and an ecological wonder. A range of majestic snowcapped mountains in the distance are complemented by areas of U-shaped valleys carved out by glaciers less than 10,000 years ago. The landscape is very diverse, consisting of a "taiga" where forests of white spruce, Aspen, paper birch, poplar, black spruce and other evergreens along with many types of flowers, mosses and lichens flourish. This area yields to treeless, rolling tundra of waist-high willows, birch and other low plants which can survive in thin, rocky soil or moist, spongy soil. Below the timberline of the mountains are rocky ridges and steep cliffs, where Dall sheep roam. Rivers and streams cut through the area, and many species of wildlife, as well as a myriad of birds and wild flowers, live in this area. In late August only the fireweed blooms, but in September it is said that the entire area is ablaze with color. Denali is truly a "living tapestry" and has remained virtually unchanged for centuries.

For a great tour of Denali, take the five-hour bus trip through the park. This shows only a small portion of the area but gives a good overview. Longer tours are available. A side tour can be taken to the dog kennels operated by Forest Rangers. The sled dogs they raise and train there are actually "working dogs," bred for pulling a musher through the entire park in extremely harsh winter conditions.

Leaving Denali, the visitor boards the domed train for a 4 ¾-hour trip to Talkeetna and then on to McKinley for an overnight stay. Talkeetna is an Alaskan village known for white-water rafting on the glacier-fed rivers or as the starting point for climbing or "flight seeing" Mt. McKinley.



## McKINLEY EXPRESS RAIL TRIP

The trip to **Whittier**, population 117, takes five hours and it's where the ship can be boarded for the cruise portion of the trip. The train winds through lovely scenery of tall spruce and evergreen forests dissected by pewter-hued glacial rivers. Moose and log cabins scattered here and there with sea planes parked alongside can be seen. It is said that 60 percent of the population has a pilot's license. Alaskans never throw anything away, hence the "junkyard look" of old cars, boats, trucks and motors littering even the nicer homes.

The train travels through Wasilla, home of Sarah Palin, and travels on to Anchorage, Alaska's largest city with a population of 275,000. It's a well laid-out city that boasts shopping centers, parks and attractive homes.

From that point on, the landscape reveals rivers surrounded by snowcapped and glacier-laden mountain ranges and lush green forests of tall evergreens and all types of ferns.



For more information you can check out these sites: [www.NCL.com](http://www.NCL.com), [www.HollandAmerica.com](http://www.HollandAmerica.com), [www.Alaskancruises2010.com](http://www.Alaskancruises2010.com), [www.cruisewest.com](http://www.cruisewest.com) (small ships; adventure oriented), [www.Grandcircle.com](http://www.Grandcircle.com)

## CRUISE TOUR

The cruise begins with two days of scenic wonders along the Gulf of Alaska and into the inner passageway to College Fjord, Glacier Bay and the rare tidewater glaciers. The ship comes quite close where passengers can see debris from the glacier's journey down the mountains and the differing shades of blue reflected in the ice. The crack and boom of huge chunks of ice as they break and fall into the water, a process known as "calving," sounds eerily like a summer thunderstorm. This is also a great place to catch a glimpse of whales.

**Skagway** is perhaps the most authentic gold rush boomtown in Alaska. Storefronts represent the saloons and dance halls of that time, but most of them now contain jewelry stores.

Skagway, once known as the "gateway to the gold fields of the Klondike," provides access to the White Pass which was regarded as the shortest, but most difficult route for prospectors flooding the region more than 100 years ago. The landscape is beautiful and rugged. There are bus tours available. One will take you to a Salmon Bake, where you can sit outside at picnic tables and eat delicious Alaskan salmon with sides of potato salad, slaw and corn bread, washed down with an Alaskan beer.

**Juneau**, Alaska's capital city, is another town founded because of the discovery of three of the largest gold mines in the world. Though the mines are now closed, Juneau continues to thrive as the center of government and is very understated and unpretentious. Its capital building is one of three in the United States without a dome.

Tours are available to take visitors to the **Mendenhall Glacier**, which spills from snowcapped mountains in the Juneau ice field into a lovely river. Afterward, it's worth the side trip to the **MaCaulay Salmon Hatchery** where they fertilize and raise young salmon in incubation trays and "imprint" them with the scent of the river water. When released and mature, they remember to return to this area and are given electric shocks in order to retrieve their eggs and "milt." The fertilization process begins anew. Salmon die soon after so their remains provide food for dogs, bears and birds. Nothing is wasted.

**Ketchikan** is called by two other names: "Salmon Capital of the World" and "Alaska's Rain Capital." (The annual precipitation is around 162 inches). Today, Ketchikan has the highest concentration of Native Alaskans in the state. Again, jewelry stores dominate the town.

A worthwhile trip is to the Rain Forest. Who knew there would be rain forests in Alaska? Don't miss the very pleasant half-mile trek into this stunning area. The guide will warn about bears in the forest and on our recent trip, we were told that we need to stay together and if a bear is seen, to stand quietly and do not run away! If the bear should come close, we were told to hold up our arms, spread out our coats and sing or talk. As we wandered through the damp, mossy, tree-canopied area, we approached a stream where many dead salmon were being eaten by all sorts of birds. Suddenly we saw a mother bear with two cubs making their way up the incline away from us. Another large bear also appeared on our trail. He looked our way and then slowly stepped into the stream to catch fish. You could hear cameras clicking furiously in that quiet forest! It was a photo-op well worth the trip.

The final destination is **Vancouver**, Canada. After spending a day at sea, cruising along beautiful coast lines, the trip comes to a close -- a most delightful and memorable adventure.

Alaskans are a hardy lot, dedicated to the land and seemingly impervious to the harsh weather conditions. The vastness and beauty of Alaska seems enough for those who remain all year; those who wait until late May through mid-September to share their state with visitors.

*Kathryn, when not out enjoying her traveling adventures, can be reached at [marchi-wre@mris.com](mailto:marchi-wre@mris.com)*

*Why not try something new - maybe you'll end up liking it.*

# ArtView

By Tricia Herban

## Baltimore

### The Baltimore Museum of Art

**Current offering:** *Cezanne and American Modernism*. Before Cezanne was recognized in Europe, he was championed by American artists. This exhibition compares 16 works by Cezanne—landscapes, still lifes, portraits and pictures of bathers—with the art of more than 30 American artists including Maurice Prendergast, Marsden Hartley, Man Ray and Arshile Gorky. Moreover, Cezanne's influence on early photography is demonstrated in the works of Alfred Stieglitz, Paul Strand and Edward Steichen. Paintings are drawn from private collections across the country as well as The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Art Institute of Chicago and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

**On view:** Feb. 14 - May 23, 2010.

**Location:** 10 Art Museum Drive near North Charles and 31<sup>st</sup> streets.

**Getting there:** Parking at nearby meters and garages (MD Transit Buses 3 & 11).

**Admission:** Free except special exhibitions such as this one: Adults \$15, seniors \$12, students with ID \$10, youth 5-12 \$6, children five and younger, free. Tickets may be purchased at the museum or with a service charge from [www.Tickets.com](http://www.Tickets.com) or 1 800-619-6272.

**Hours:** Wednesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Closed on Monday.

**Food service:** Gertrude's Restaurant offers fine Chesapeake style dining for lunch and dinner. Brunch service on Saturday and Sunday begins at 10:30 a.m.

**Of note:** The gift shop features books for adults as well as a fine selection for children.

**Contact information:** [www.artbma.org](http://www.artbma.org) or 443 573-1700

### The Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland

**Current offering:** *African American History and Culture. From Process to Print: Graphic Works* by Romare Bearden. This major exhibition showcases Bearden's graphic production over a period of more than 30 years. His works interweave literary, biblical and mythological influences with the popular culture of his time and themes that reflect his experiences as an African American.

Technical developments and experimentation are demonstrated through collage-based works that were reinterpreted through photography. A highlight of the show is two series of photoengravings: *The Train* and *The Family*. Bearden is one of the 20th century's most respected African American artists.

**On view:** Jan. 16 - March 28, 2010.

**Location:** 830 East Pratt Street (corner Pratt and President Streets).

**Getting there:** Pratt Street to President Street, museum on the left.

**Admission:** Adults \$8, seniors and students \$6, youth six and under free.

**Hours:** Wednesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. Closed Monday and Tuesday.

**Food service:** Museum cafe serves Wednesday through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Contact information:**

[www.africanamericanculture.org](http://www.africanamericanculture.org) or 443 263-1800.

### The Walters Museum of Art

**Current offering:** *Japanese Cloisonné Enamels from the Stephen W. Fisher Collection*. The enamels presented in this exhibition were truly arts of the emperors. The Meiji ruler fostered the arts for 50 years from 1870 to 1920. As Japan was beginning to look outward, participation in work expositions provided an effective opportunity to showcase Japan as a country of exquisite artistic skill, refinement and sensitivity to beauty. The enameled metal boxes, vases, trays and urns combine technical mastery with a profound response to natural beauty. Cloisonné is the process of taking a metal form, adhering narrow metal (bronze, silver or gold) strips to the surface and filling the spaces between the strips with a paste of ground colored glass. When the piece is heated for as long as 14 hours the glass becomes enamel. This process may be repeated several times before the piece is polished smooth and the finishing touch of metal rims and bottoms is applied.

**On view:** Feb. 14 - June 13, 2010.

**Location:** 600 North Charles Street.

**Getting there:** On-street metered parking and nearby street lots.

**Admission:** Free including special exhibitions.

**Hours:** Wednesday through Sunday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Closed Monday and Tuesday.

**Food service:** The cafeteria provides a sandwich and dessert menu.

**Of note:** A catalogue is available. The gift shop is extensive.

**Contact information:**

[www.thewalters.org](http://www.thewalters.org) or 410 547-9000

## Washington, DC

### The Phillips Collection

**Current offering:** *Georgia O'Keefe: Abstraction*. This show highlights "adventurous" abstractions from O'Keefe's early career in which she worked to visualize a "simpler clearer vision of life." Her goal was to "abstract toward reality" by layering her experience of an object onto the flat surface of canvas or paper. O'Keefe is best known for a rare appreciation that often led to a close-up possession of that vision. She said that her goal was to explore the object she presented and she did this by creating abstractions that are at once tactile and color-filled. This is a unique opportunity to see more than 100 paintings, drawings and watercolors dating from 1915 to 1970.

**On View:** Feb. 6 - May 9, 2010.

**Location:** 1600 21<sup>st</sup> Street, NW, near 21<sup>st</sup> and Q.

**Getting there:** Metro: DuPont Circle, Red Line.

**Admission:** This is a ticketed exhibition: Adults \$12. Students and seniors 62 and over \$10. Weekdays, the permanent collection is seen by donation; on weekends the fee is \$10 unless a special exhibition is in effect.

**Hours:** Tuesday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Thursday 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. and Sunday 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Closed Monday.

**Food service:** Informal cafeteria.

**Of note:** Gift shop highlighting books and cards.

**Contact information:**

[www.phillipscollection.org](http://www.phillipscollection.org) or 202 387-2152

### The Corcoran Gallery of Art

**Current offering:** *Turner to Cezanne: Masterpieces from the Davies Collection, National Museum Wales*. Fifty-three carefully selected works from an exquisite collection of impressionist and Post-impressionist art have been sent across the Atlantic Ocean, offering an exceptional opportunity to view works by Daumier, Manet, Monet, Pissarro, Millet, Renoir and Turner, among others. These works were purchased during the 1908-1922 period, about the same time that Gertrude Stein and the Cone sisters were patronizing the cubists and impressionists in France. This collection presents "the evolution of early modern art beginning with the dramatic romanticism of Turner on through the expressionist post-impressionism of van Gogh."

**On view:** Jan. 30 - April 25, 2010.

**Location:** 500 17<sup>th</sup> Street, NW

**Getting there:** Metro: Farragut West, Orange Line; Farragut North, Red Line.

**Admission:** Seniors \$8, adults \$10.

**Hours:** Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Thursday 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Closed Monday and Tuesday.

**Food service:** It has a lovely informal dining area with a food cart featuring quality items.

**Of note:** Small gift shop.

**Contact information:**

[www.corcoran.org](http://www.corcoran.org) or 202 639-8574

### **The Smithsonian American Art Museum**

**Current offering:** *Framing the West: The Survey Photographs of Timothy H. O'Sullivan.* O'Sullivan lived from 1840 to 1882 and was the photographer for both the King and Wheeler surveys, which included the area of Shoshone Falls, Idaho. His pictures of the Snake River and Shoshone present a unique view of the untamed West in all its magnitude and grandeur. The exhibition draws on works in the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian American Art Museum and other museum collections.

**On view:** Through May 9, 2010.  
**Location:** 8<sup>th</sup> and F streets NW.  
**Getting there:** Metro: Gallery Place, Red, Yellow and Green lines.  
**Admission:** Free.  
**Hours:** 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily.  
**Food service:** Wonderful courtyard café in conjunction with the National Portrait Gallery.  
**Of note:** Gift shop  
**Contact information:**

**www.americanart.si.edu** or 202 208-8113

### **The National Gallery of Art**

**Current offering:** *From Impressionism to Modernism: The Chester Dale Collection.* This exhibit presents 83 of the finest French and American paintings from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Some of the best known works are: Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot's *Forest of Fontainebleau*, Auguste Renoir's *A Girl with a Watering Can*, Mary Cassatt's *Boating Party*, Edouard Manet's *Old Musician*, Pablo Picasso's *Family of Saltimbanques*, and George Bellows' *Blue Morning*. Other artists represented include Paul Cézanne, Edgar Degas, Vincent van Gogh, Henri Matisse, Amedeo Modigliani, and Claude Monet.

**On view:** Jan. 31 - July 31, 2010.

**Location:** Between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7th streets at Constitution Avenue, NW.

**Getting there:** Metro: Judiciary Square, Red Line; Archives, Yellow and Green lines; Smithsonian, Blue and Orange lines.

**Admission:** Free.

**Hours:** Open daily. Hours: Monday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**Food service:** Offers a seated dining room and a food court.

**Of note:** There are two outstanding museum shops.

**Contact information:** [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov) or 202 737-4215.

### **Annapolis**

#### **The Mitchell Gallery**

**Current offering:** *From La Serenissima to the Eternal City: The Grand Tour* is an exhibition that focuses on two of the major cities that British young men frequented in the late 1700s. The Grand Tour was an opportunity to see the wider world and learn about its culture and customs as part of the "classical education" expected of a gentleman. Venice and Rome were the highlights, presenting classical ruins and the brilliant art of the Renaissance masters. Painters and graphic artists such as Piranesi recorded the architecture, famous personages and popular religious and secular events of the times. Travelers delighted in the opportunity to acquire souvenirs of the places they had seen and Piranesi, Canaletto, Guardi, Robert and Joli were prolific in response to this demand.

**On view:** March 14 - April 23, 2010.

**Location:** St. Johns College

**Getting there:** Parking garages available nearby.

**Admission:** Free.

**Hours:** Tuesday through Sunday 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. and Friday 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. Closed Monday.

**Food service:** Many good restaurants in downtown Annapolis, an easy five-minute walk.

**Contact information:** [www.sjca.edu](http://www.sjca.edu) or 410 263-2371

### **Philadelphia**

#### **Philadelphia Museum of Art**

**Current offering:** *Picasso and the Avant-Garde in Paris* This blockbuster show offers nearly 200 paintings, sculptures and works on paper. Works follow Picasso's career from cubism through surrealism and present them in juxtaposition with the European and American expatriate artists who formed an international avant-garde group known as the School of Paris, including Marc Chagall, Jacques Lipchitz, Henry Bruce and Man Ray. This is a ticketed exhibition: Adults \$20, seniors \$18, students \$16 and youth 5-12 \$7. Purchase tickets at the museum or by phone: 215 235-7469 (service charge applies).

**Location:** 26th Street and Benjamin Franklin Parkway in Center City.

**Getting there:** Mapquest for directions.

**Admission:** Admission to the Main Building: \$16 seniors over 65, \$14 students and youth and 13-18 \$12. Youth 12 and under free.

**Hours:** Tuesday through Sunday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday open until 8:45 p.m. Closed Monday.

**Food service:** Restaurant for lunch daily. Champagne brunch on Sunday and dinner on Friday.

**Of note:** First Sunday of the month is "pay what you wish." Extensive gift shop.

**Contact information:**

[www.philamuseum.org](http://www.philamuseum.org) or 215 763-8100

*Tricia Herban, an avid patron of the arts, can be reached at [triciah@erols.com](mailto:triciah@erols.com)*

OutLook's

### *Bits & Bytes*

If you or a loved one has incurred astronomical or hard-to-identify medical bills, this is a site worth a look:

[www.billadvocates.com](http://www.billadvocates.com)

There are costs involved but you may find it well worthwhile.

# Tea for Two, or One, or More: All About Tea

By Peggy Kiefer

“Do you have a stomach ache?  
“Can't sleep?  
“Don't you feel well?  
“Do you need a break?”  
“Are you all stressed out?”

**Answer:** Have a cup of tea. How often have you heard this advice? It seems that a cup of tea can cure almost any kind of problem. At least, that's what I was led to believe as a child. Many people must have some faith in this theory, because while coffee is more popular than tea in the United States, tea is the second-most consumed beverage in the world, just behind water. So, there must be something special about this brewed beverage.

## What is Tea?

Basically, tea is the processed and dried leaves of just one species of a plant called *Camellia sinensis*. From this one type of plant thousands of teas are produced. Many herbal tea drinkers do not know that herbal teas are really not tea, but dried leaves or flowers from various plants and herbs.

## How Did Tea Originate?

A legend about the origin of tea comes from where else, but China, where tea is definitely the drink of choice of millions of people. It seems that around 2737 BC, a legendary emperor, named Shen-Nung, who was an inventor of agriculture and Chinese medicine, was drinking a bowl of boiling water one day. A few leaves from a nearby tea plant blew into the water, changing its color. Shen-Nung took a sip and liked the taste and the way the drink made him feel restored both in body and mind.

A variant of this legend is that the emperor tested the medicinal properties of some poisonous herbs and found tea to be an antidote.

Theories of the origin of tea are often religious or royal in nature. You can pick your favorite legend.

Early in tea's history, it was used for medicinal purposes and had a bitter taste. Its popularity as a popular, tasty drink didn't develop until hundreds of years later.



## Major Tea-Growing Regions

Even though it is believed that China is the largest producer of tea, India actually surpasses it in production. Indians grow mainly black tea, and they have a wide range of tastes and quality. Best known are Assam and Darjeeling tea.

Chinese teas are more varied. Hundreds of types and varieties are produced here. China categorizes tea by leaf size, the place it is grown and the leaf shape. The main teas of China are black teas, green teas, oolong teas and scented teas.

Sri Lanka exports a large amount of tea worldwide. Most of these are black teas and are widely consumed in the United States. Best known are Ceylon, and various type of pekoe.

Japan has a very efficient and well organized tea production. Some of the world's premium green teas come from this country. Best known are Bancha, Sencha and Genmai Cha.

Taiwan produces many of the same teas as China. Their oolong and Pouchong teas are claimed to be exceptional by dedicated tea drinkers. Best known is Formosa oolong.

## Types of Tea

Although tea comes from one species, *Camellia sinensis*, there are three major varieties. They are the India or Assam, larger-leaved plants that usually grow well at lower altitudes; the China, small-leaved plants that generally grow better at higher altitudes; and the hybrid, a tea between the China and Indian teas.

When processed, four different types of tea are produced. They are black tea, white tea, green tea and oolong tea. Tea is often sold as a blend of two or more of the four types. Tea can be flavored with spice, scented with flower petals or combined with spices and fruits. Chai tea is a favorite and is a black tea brewed with a variety of spices. The way tea is processed produces the wide variety of tastes.

## Tea Growing and Harvesting

Tea grows best in higher altitudes and rainy climates. Misty mornings and cool weather also produce higher quality tea. This is similar to the growing conditions of coffee.

*Why not just live for today and let tomorrow take care of itself?*

The harvesting of tea is back-breaking work that takes a trained worker to be successful. When plucking the leaves of a high quality tea, only the bud and second and third leaves are plucked. This is called fine plucking. If too many leaves are plucked, a lower quality of tea is produced. This is called coarse plucking. The typical tea bush will usually produce about 3,000 tea leaves a year, which amounts to about a pound of processed tea.

The leaves are collected in baskets and taken to a factory to be processed. How they are processed depends on the type of tea desired. As mentioned earlier, these procedures produce white, green, black and oolong teas.

### Grading Tea

After the tea is processed, it is graded by size, an art passed down through the centuries. Broken, smaller leaves have more flavor and brew faster than whole leaf. The type of tea found in most tea bags is called fannings, which involves the old practice of using a fan to separate the smallest pieces. Interestingly, the first tea bags were made from hand-sewn bags, usually made from silk muslin. These date back to the early 1900s. Tea bags were actually first successfully sold in 1904 by a tea and coffee merchant from New York named Thomas Sullivan. It didn't take long for a machine to be invented to sew the tea bags. This cut the time and cost of producing tea. In 1915 Thomas Lipton incorporated the Lipton Tea Company.

In the United States, coffee is a more popular drink than tea, but the specialty tea market has quadrupled here from 1993 to 2008 to \$6.8 billion a year.

The Turkish people are reported as being the biggest drinkers of tea in the world. The average Turk drinks more than a thousand cups of tea a year. Next comes the United Kingdom followed by Morocco. The United States is nowhere near the top in tea drinking, but, as noted, tea is becoming more popular year by year.

### The Brewing of Tea

Let's get down to the most important question. How do I make the perfect cup of tea?

It seems there is no easy answer to this question. Everyone who drinks tea, has grown tea or enjoys a cup of tea has a favorite method. But let's look at a consensus of opinions.

1. Have patience. Take your time.
2. Use a good quality of tea.
3. Have a clean kettle
4. Use fresh, cold water. Bottled or filtered tap water is best.
5. Bring the water to a boil, but don't let it boil too long or it loses oxygen.
6. Use one heaping teaspoon of loose tea or a tea bag per person. Warm the cup or teapot first.
7. Allow to steep in the cup, mug or teapot for an average time of three to five minutes. Herbal teas may take longer and green tea less time.
8. Remove the loose leaves or tea bag.
9. Stir and add your choice of finishing touches to your taste: lemon, honey, sugar and milk are favorites.

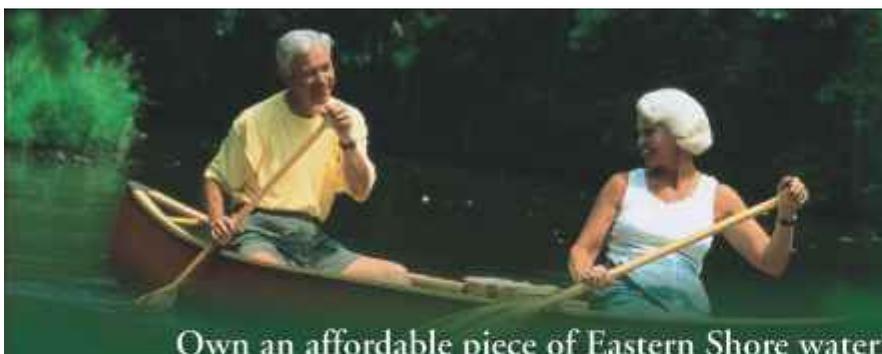
The final taste of your tea will depend on several factors: tea type, leaf size, hardness of the water, water temperature and type of cup used (china, plastic or Styrofoam). The tea should be enjoyed soon after brewing. Your British tea-drinking friends may have their own way of brewing tea, but that is another article.

So, next time you are stressed, can't sleep, don't feel well or just need a break, brew a cup of your favorite tea and curl up in your favorite chair to savor the aroma and taste of the world's second most popular beverage. As the British say, "Have a cuppa." 

*Peggy Kiefer ([zinkiefer@aol.com](mailto:zinkiefer@aol.com)) is a freelance writer who is only an iced tea drinker and definitely prefers coffee.*

**For a really thorough and fascinating book about tea, try to find the book "Tea: The Drink that Changed the World" by Laura C. Martin, Tuttle Publishing, 2007. You will learn more than you ever wanted or needed to know about tea and all its history and popularity.**





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# Stylish Savings

By Louise Whiteside

**S**tylish yet budget-minded? Yes, it's possible! But it's important to know a few tricks that can help you get the most for your money while looking great. Here are some suggestions for keeping up with fashion and down on expenses.

**1. Know your sale dates.** Everything eventually goes on sale. In general, from January through March you'll find active wear and winter clothing (including coats) at reduced prices. In July and August, summer clothes are greatly reduced, which means you can enjoy them for the rest of the summer.)

**2. Avoid paying retail.** If you love an item and can wait, give your name and telephone number to the department manager and ask to be notified when the item goes on sale. Or, you can inquire as to when you should check in again.

**3. Use the discount stores to purchase inexpensive clothing.** (For example, a low-cost T-shirt combined with a designer suit will give you a classy look!)

**4. Accessorize.** Buy inexpensive jewelry, belts and scarves to update your wardrobe for just a few dollars.

**5. Buy one or two really good items that anchor the rest of your wardrobe.** For example, a good basic suit in a neutral color, such as black, navy or grey. You can spend less money for T-shirts, sweaters, undergarments, evening wear and costume jewelry. Low-cost pieces look more expensive when paired with good-quality items.

**6. Don't buy something just because it's on sale.** Be sure it fits with your wardrobe, lifestyle and body type. If it's unflattering, it's no bargain!

**7. Don't ever buy something that's too small, in hopes of losing five or 10 pounds.** You may never lose that weight, so dress for the body you have now.

**8. Find an excellent tailor.** He or she can adapt your clothes to your particular figure, and can update your wardrobe to fit



current trends, such as shortening skirts to the popular lengths.

**9. If something is "trendy," and you're not sure if you like it, buy a cheaper version and wear it before investing in the more expensive style.** Some items go out of fashion very quickly.

**10. Shop in unlikely places such as teen clothing stores.** You may be surprised at the cute shoes, handbags and accessories hidden in the back of the store.

**11. Buy new, interesting buttons for jackets, blazers and sweaters.** The garments will look brand new.

**12. Haggle!** Many businesses will give you a deeper discount if you simply ask. In the event there is a slight defect in a garment, such as a missing button, a manager may knock off a few dollars. You will find this practice more comfortable after you've done it a few times.

**13. You can find many bargains on the Web.** For lower prices, try Overstock.com and for comparison shopping, try Shopzilla.com

When you're getting ready for some serious bargain shopping, dress for a heavy-duty day: Wear flat, slip-off shoes, clothing that's easy to take off and put on and no lipstick or jewelry, which may damage clothes. Don't stop for meals; instead, carry small snacks and bottled water. Try to arrive at your mall at around 10 a.m., when there's the least amount of traffic and the pickings are good!

You may enjoy shopping with a friend, who can give you feedback on how things look on you, or ask the sales staff to give their opinions. Before you buy an item, consider how it will blend with the rest of your wardrobe. And, for a final piece of advice: Never buy something that you don't love!

Have fun shopping, and may your savings be impressive! 

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## OutLook's Bits & Bytes

Looking for some insights into medical health for the over-50 adult? Johns Hopkins has a site cranking out lots of ideas and interesting topics specifically aimed at the over-50 adult that will keep you informed on the most common medical conditions that could affect healthy aging. Log on to [www.johnshopkinshealthalerts.com](http://www.johnshopkinshealthalerts.com)

# Writers' Group Makes Solid Return to Annapolis

By Joanne R. Alloway

When you think of Annapolis, do you think of it as the home of hundreds of writers? Probably not, because it is more well-known as the home of the bountiful Chesapeake Bay, sailors and power boaters, crabbers and fishermen and those who love our colonial history and our crab cakes. But Annapolis was the first home of the Maryland Writers' Association (MWA), and today it remains the home of many writers.

In 1984 the MWA held its first meetings in Annapolis at Maryland Hall on Chase Street. The membership soon outgrew the meeting space and the meeting's location changed to meet the shifting base of members' zip codes. The meetings were moved to Baltimore and many Annapolis writers did not follow. Annapolitans can be a bit parochial. Still, the MWA prospered in Baltimore and today has almost 400 members across our state in four different chapters.

Now there is a chapter of the MWA back in Annapolis and it's stronger than ever. The chapter is not only for writers, but also for those who enjoy the writing life, that is those who write for the sheer joy of writing. The first introductory meeting held in June 2009, when more than 50 people showed up, made it clear that Annapolis and Anne Arundel County were long overdue for this locality to reconvene a writers' forum. Until then, who knew there were so many writers and would-be writers in the Annapolis area hungry to learn more about the art, craft and the business of writing? Each month the number of attendees in Annapolis has increased or at least stayed steady.

Local members can enjoy all the benefits of belonging to the state and the Annapolis chapter for only \$40 per year. This includes discounted fees for MWA events such as the Annual Writers' Conference, writing contests, opportunities to sell work at book sales, links to your personal Web site through the MWA site and all local meetings.

The Annapolis/Anne Arundel County

Chapter speakers have discussed:

- ~ getting published
- ~ selling and re-selling your work
- ~ how critique groups work
- ~ cartooning and graphic novels
- ~ the lighter side of forensic science



Coming up in the next few months speakers will address:

- ~ romantic suspense
- ~ working with agents, editors and mentors
- ~ promoting your book
- ~ building an author's platform

On the second Tuesday of each month, a meeting is held in Annapolis, usually with a speaker. Time is always available at meetings for networking among writers to discuss the nuances of the craft. Both published and unpublished writers make up the membership. Writers of novels, short stories, poetry and plays in all genres have joined the Annapolis chapter, along with those who write science fiction, romance, children's literature, memoirs and biographies, travel writing, fantasy and history.

For more information, please contact Victoria Duncan at [Victoria2write@aol.com](mailto:Victoria2write@aol.com)

Joanne R. Alloway is an author and freelance writer living in Annapolis. Her first memoir was published in 2008 by PublishAmerica. She can be reached at [jrwrite@aol.com](mailto:jrwrite@aol.com)

## Maryland Writers' Association Annual Conference – 2010

*"Don't Fight It; Write It"*

Saturday, April 24, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Baltimore Marriott Hunt Valley Inn  
Hunt Valley

Cost of Conference: \$135 for MWA members  
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Quality

# Pets to Give Tanks For

By Melissa Conroy



**W**ant a pet without the hassle of taking it for walks, scooping its litter or paying for costly vet bills? A pet fish might be just the ticket. With the cold weather still upon us, why not brighten up your kitchen or living room with a tank of colorful fish?

The good news is that taking care of fish can be as simple or as complex as you would like it to be. You can go with something as easy as a pretty beta fish swimming around in a vase to as intricate as a 55-gallon saltwater tank full of Banggai cardinals and chocolate chip starfish. Fish ownership offers a wealth of possibilities and diversions, and there are many exciting options available for someone who wishes to add an aquatic pet to their lives.

A trip to your local pet store will quickly demonstrate that there is a wide array of different types of fish, aquariums, plants, rocks and goofy decorative items like fairy castles and skeletons dressed in pirate costumes. Because there are many options out there, it is wise to do some preliminary planning and research before you fork over money for your new pet.

The first decision is whether to set up a freshwater or saltwater tank. Freshwater has the advantage of being much cheaper and easier to maintain. On the other hand, exotic tropical fish such as the stunning copperband butterfly or the unique pajama cardinal require a saltwater tank. However, saltwater tanks are time-consuming to maintain, and they require long, patient care: a properly cared for saltwater tank is basically its own unique ecosystem that takes awhile to build and develop. If you are new to caring for fish, it is wise to start out with a freshwater tank to gain some experience.

Next on the list is purchasing the right tank. While you may have a mental image of a bright orange goldfish swimming about in a pristine glass bowl, this picture is wrong for many reasons. For one, fish need space: tank overcrowding is a problem to avoid. For another, fish need their water filtered. Finally, fish need a natural habitat. Imagine living in an all-glass house: wouldn't you feel a little vulnerable? Banish that glass bowl image and keep these tips in mind.

An oft-repeated claim is that you need a gallon of water for every inch of fish, so two three-inch fish need at least six gallons of water combined. However, some fish like oscars or koi need more room than that. Goldfish in particular require about 10 gallons per fish. When you are purchasing your tank, keep these numbers in mind because overcrowding leads to more maintenance and cleaning, higher chances of disease and reduced water quality.

Along with a tank, you will need a filter to clean out fish excrement and food particles. There are many different kinds of filters on the market and numerous strident debates on the Internet about the best type. Biowheels are one of the most popular types of filters on the market today; however, there are also corner filters, undergravel filters, sponge filters and many more.



You also need to purchase some sort of habitat for your fish because they will want rocks or plants to hide behind. The habitat will make your fish feel more secure and also provide an interesting visual appeal. Both living and plastic plants are available to decorate your aquarium. Just be aware that your fish may gobble up any living plant you stick in the tank.

It is best not to purchase your fish on the same day you buy your tank because the tank needs to be set up and prepared. The tap water you drink every day contains chlorine which is not healthy for fish. Tap water, therefore, must be treated with chlorinate remover, which you can find at any pet store. It is also an excellent idea to set the tank up and having it running at least 24 hours before you put in the fish. This helps chlorine evaporate from the water and the water reach room temperature. It is also an excellent idea to purchase a water test kit to measure the water pH and other components that may harm the fish.

Deciding what fish to buy is also important because not all species of fish coexist peacefully. If you drop three betas into a tank together, fighting will most likely break out. Big fish often go for smaller fish, cichlids are known to be aggressive and fish with long flowing fins are at risk for being nibbled on. Luckily there are many sites on the Internet which will advise you about which fish to mix and not mix.

When your tank is set up and your fish are ready to be introduced to their new home, don't simply open the bag and pour them in; the shock could easily kill them. Instead, put the bag directly into the tank and let it float around for about 20 minutes. This will accustom fish to the new temperature in the tank. During this time, periodically add some water from the tank to the bag to introduce your fish to their tank water's pH. Then undo the bag and take the fish out with a net. It is best not to dump the bag water into the tank as it may contain diseases from the pet store.

Your new pets may be shy at first, but they will accustom themselves to their new home. Make sure to keep a careful eye on them. During the early stages, it is quite common for fish to mysteriously die. It make take awhile before your aquarium reaches the right stasis point and you figure out the proper balance of pH and other important water components. Be patient. An aquarium takes time to develop.

As your fish are getting acclimated, they will soon be hungry. A good-quality fish food that is tailored to your specific fish is vital. The nutrition needs of your fish will vary depending on the species, but regardless of the type you have, overfeeding is a definite problem that can damage their health and dirty the water. Feed them what they will consume in a few minutes and not so much that there is food left over when they stop eating. Generally, fish need feeding once or

twice a day and don't be fooled if you see them swimming frantically up to the surface and flailing about when you walk by: they're not starving.

Your duties as a new fish owner also extend to cleaning. Fish will pump out plenty of ammonia and other wastes, so it is important to make certain that the filter is working properly and is cleaned on a regular basis. Keep an eye on your tank: If it starts to look dirty, it's time for a cleaning!

While owning fish can be a bit of work, their colorful fins and adorable antics are worth it. Simply watching your fish swim about lazily is soothing and can bring some joy into an otherwise bleak day. And when you consider all the maintenance required for a bird, cat or dog, fish are positively a breeze!





## A Tool For Renewal: Keeping a March Journal

By Victoria Duncan

**H**ow many of us remember seventh grade with fondness? Well, if you're like me, you wince when you remember yourself as an awkward pre-teen. The times sure were a-changing, but I spent most of that year just wishing I'd change and mature a whole lot faster than nature intended. In fact, I feared nature's calling card missed me completely. Where's Mother Nature when you need her most?

In early spring, my English teacher, whose name remains lost in the recesses of my memory, assigned us to keep a nature journal for the month of March. This month, she explained, was much like seventh-graders, caught between two states of being. She said 12-year-olds wedged between childhood and adulthood could learn much by paying attention to nature's transition from winter to spring. The assignment produced groans from most of my class. But me? I fell for it completely and her assignment produced a life-long habit.

Each year, I keep a journal specifically dedicated to the month of March when winter wanes and spring teases us with warmer weather. Even if I write only sporadically for the rest of the year, I

remain faithful to the process in this month of so much change in our natural world. March presents itself as an apt metaphor for many of the transitions we face in life. As we age, we face transitions from a job to retirement, from being parents to becoming grandparents, from enjoying physical strength and well-being to dealing with health challenges.

Mother Nature? She can teach us a great deal if we pay attention. And so can good teachers. At 12 years old, I learned through keeping my *March Journal* to pay attention to the changes happening in the natural world around me. I learned how to be reflective and I learned something about enjoying and appreciating the present moment. That's pretty powerful stuff for a seventh-grader and a good lesson to revisit each year.

As we enter March winter-weary and sometimes a bit blue, springtime can still seem too far off. Keeping a nature journal allows us to see that the renewal of spring is just around the corner and is a tool for personal growth at the same time. Give it a try—it's only one month! You may find the practice so rewarding that you make it a regular practice too.

*Difficulties are part of everyone's life. The only real difference is how you're going to handle it.*

# Ask the Undertaker

## Need Help Getting Started?

- **Buy a journal.** Try a fresh spring color or design that appeals to you.
- **Fine-tune observations.** Get outside and wake up your senses---all of them! With close and patient observation, attend to sights, smells, textures, sounds and even tastes.
- **Use concrete images.** Record observations such as the natural progression of weather, the emergence of new spring growth and the changing light of our lengthened days.
- **Note your inner response.** Nature offers rich metaphors and lessons for living our daily lives. Pay attention to the emotions, memories, insights and even the dreams that a close study of nature evokes in you.
- **Add visual detail.** Sketch, doodle or make a collage of photographs or clippings from a garden catalogue or on your journal pages. Use colored pencils or markers to write in circles or upside down. Have fun!
- **Reserve a review.** Wait to go over your work until the end of the month. If you peek earlier, your inner critic may sabotage your efforts. In the beginning, you may feel self-conscious on the page. However, by the end of the month, your creative juices will be flowing. And it is then fun to peruse your journal and appreciate your progress. It's like opening a surprise gift.
- **Get inspired.** Read more about nature journals by checking out these books:
  - *The Country Diary of an Edwardian Lady* by Edith Holden
  - *A Trail Through Leaves: The Journal as a Path to Place* by Hannah Hinchman
  - *Leaf Bird Days and Firefly Nights: Personal Renewal Through Nature Journaling* by Beverly J. Letchworth
  - *Keeping a Nature Journal: Discover a Whole New Way of Seeing the World Around You* by Claire Walker Leslie and Charles E. Roth

## OutLook's Bits & Bytes

Would you like to watch a movie on your computer? Go to [www.hulu.com](http://www.hulu.com) These aren't always first-run movies, but they're free and you're bound to find a few that you'd like to watch.

## What Exactly Do You Do?

By Ryan Helfenbein

A few weeks ago I returned home from an out-of-state conference. While traveling I had conversations with individuals on the plane, at the airport and even in the cab. Undoubtedly, the common question would come up, "Are you here for business or pleasure?" The answer was business and that I was in town for a conference. "Come on Ryan," I'd say to myself, "why say that?" You know you are now going to have to answer the very familiar follow-up question: "So what do you do?" Fellow readers, I've been around the funeral industry all my life. I have gotten pretty creative when answering this question, since it often ends up eliciting the same reaction, followed by numerous questions. But over the years I've become very proud of what I do, and I almost say it with a smile: "I'm an undertaker." As peoples' eyes become as big as softballs, they would take one step back and reply with a "What?" or "Ewww" or my favorite, "Are you serious?"

So, to answer that last question, "Well, I am serious, it's what I do. Yes, it's definitely not an occupation that small children are running around the yard pretending to be and they're not asking their parents to buy the latest "Undertaker Man" action figure, but I am proud to say I help people heal through the most difficult time of life – losing a loved one. I guess one could say that the scientific aspect of the funeral industry could be viewed as being a bit morbid, but there is so much more that undertakers can provide for a family today that they never did before.

My industry has changed over the years. Technology is moving us toward more personalized service and merchandise. Pictures resting on a table in the visitation room are now being saved on DVDs, which can be shown throughout the funeral home or uploaded to the Internet. Services in a funeral home are now visible to family and friends through webcasting. Recently a funeral home had a relative of the deceased participate in a service through webcasting and a speaker phone while he was on active duty with the military. Today we see food and



refreshments being provided, and families can participate in the service through balloon and teddy bear ceremonies. Even themed rooms are now available. In Michigan one funeral home offers different rooms for families to choose from such as a *man cave* with leather recliners and the deceased's favorite sports team playing on a TV. Others include a 50s diner theme, or an elegant living room setting with grand fireplace and even an "outdoorsman" room.

The old days of selecting a casket and a cemetery lot are now being enhanced with selections of memorial jewelry, customized cards and register books, as well as personalized keepsakes. Who would have thought we'd be going to the local undertaker to buy jewelry? The keepsakes that funeral homes are offering families today are everything from acrylic works of art, Nambe designed mementos, to formal portraits made from beloved family photos. And remember the smell of flowers in a funeral home? Not anymore! A funeral home in Ohio now cooks fresh baked cookies every morning in the foyer of their funeral home, creating an aroma that reminds visitors of fond memories when visiting their facility while paying respects to their loved one.

The point here is that most reputable funeral homes today are training their staff to truly become the wedding planners of the death industry. Our job as undertakers encompasses so much more than preparing a loved one for a visitation, cremation ceremony or burial service. Our job is now to walk a family through the process of developing a meaningful celebration of the life of their loved one.

Ryan, a licensed funeral director and certified planning counselor, can be reached at [Ryan@fhnFuneralHome.com](mailto:Ryan@fhnFuneralHome.com) or 410-758-3987.



## Walk a Mile in My Shoes

By Leah Lancione

For many, walking is the fitness regimen of choice. And for walkers, a good shoe is a necessity. The type of shoe you select is subjective, depending on the level of your fitness dedication, the distance you walk regularly, your foot structure or the comfort level you require. Regardless of your personal preferences, you want to choose a shoe that will help prevent injury, be comfortable and still provide support for a good workout. It's important to determine how your feet are shaped. Do you have a high arch or a flat foot? Do you roll your heel and arch inward, as in overpronation? Do your feet not roll inwardly enough, as in supination? Visit a podiatrist or a certified fitness trainer to verify what type of shoe you should purchase; you may have very specific motion-control or cushioning needs.

*Shape* magazine, which is known for its monthly fitness tips and informational articles for women, has named Ryka Radiant as its top choice. The magazine lists the shoe's rubber outsole, shock-absorbing heel insert, foam foot-bed and arch support as reasons for the superior rating. These shoes cost about \$70 and can be purchased online at [www.ryka.com](http://www.ryka.com). The magazine's runner-up was the "Earth Kinetic," which is structured to facilitate muscle sculpting. These shoes are a little pricier (\$109) and can be ordered at [www.planetshoes.com](http://www.planetshoes.com).

*Prevention* magazine rates the Adidas Supernova Glide as tops for walkers who are

prone to getting blisters or calluses. The claim is that the seam-free material and stretchy forefoot prevents rubbing and provides ample room for toes. These shoes cost \$100 and can be found at most athletic shoe stores or online at [www.shopadidas.com](http://www.shopadidas.com).

The American Academy of Podiatric Sports Medicine ([www.aapsm.org/walkingshoes.html](http://www.aapsm.org/walkingshoes.html)) rates shoes on their ability to provide motion control and stability and prevent overpronation or the possibility of ankle sprains. The academy concluded that the Asics Gel 4 to 8 Walker has maximum motion control.

*Consumer Reports* rated the Champion Amp 2 as a best buy for men and the Ryka Core Strength XT and Avia A104W for women—both cross-trainers. The shoes were analyzed by their fit, cushioning and flexibility, all important when picking walking shoes.

The New Balance N-ergy 1200s are designed with a cushioning compound that provides advanced shock-absorption and enhanced arch support to stabilize and enable flexion of the forefoot. These shoes are \$119 and can be ordered at [www.newbalance.com](http://www.newbalance.com). The WW760, the official shoe of the Breast Cancer three-day walk, is an award-winning shoe created to have the utmost in cushioning and comfort. The added pink touches make it a stylish choice for some.

The Mayo Clinic online offers explanations for specific parts of shoes and their role in preventing blisters, injury or discomfort, as well as how they keep your feet properly ventilated, supported, and stabilized. Visit [www.mayoclinic.com/health/walking/HQ00885\\_D](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/walking/HQ00885_D) for a great interactive tutorial.

Here are my picks for the top shoes:

5. Saucony Men's and Women's Grid Omni Walker. Designed to balance stability and cushioning for the moderate overpronator, in classic white or black appearance (\$90).
4. Nike Air Vitality Women's Walking Shoe. Four out of five stars from consumer reviews (\$62); Nike View II Non Slip Men's Walking Shoe. Four out of five stars from consumer reviews in a sharp black appearance and just \$39.97.
3. Reebok Easy Tone walking shoes. For women, these shoes claim to tone your muscles while you get in some cardio. That deserves a high rating (\$129). Find at [www.reebok.com](http://www.reebok.com)
2. Earth Glide Vegan Walking Shoe for women and Earth Rocket Vegan Walking shoe for men. Stylish at \$99 and nonleather.
1. Brooks Sports Defyance 3 Renewable Energy Shoes. Consumer reviews cite cushioning and stability and a biodegradable midsole (\$99.95).

Hey, you can ignore my advice, but as an avid walker and runner, you may want to try walking a mile in my shoes!



# Comfort Food for the Last Days of Winter

By Emily Baran

**W**inter is almost behind us, leaving cold temperatures but sunnier skies. Hearty meals are still a priority, and it is always nice to incorporate some comfort food in those meals. In my home, chicken cordon bleu is considered comfort food.



## Chicken Cordon Bleu

- 8 pieces of thinly sliced chicken breast
- 1/2 pound Swiss cheese (estimate one and a half slices per chicken roll)
- 1/2 pound ham (estimate two slices per roll)
- 3 egg whites, beaten
- Bread crumbs
- Salt and pepper

Lay out the ham and cheese on a plate. The beaten egg whites and bread crumbs should be placed in separate shallow bowls. Spray a baking dish with nonstick spray and preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Lay the chicken slices on a cutting board with tooth picks nearby so you can easily access them to secure the rolls for baking. Season the chicken with salt and pepper, laying one to two pieces of cheese on the chicken and then two pieces of ham to cover the cheese. Tightly roll the chicken and secure with a couple of tooth picks. Completely submerge the chicken roll in the egg whites, place the chicken in the bread crumbs and roll to completely cover with bread crumbs. Then place the chicken roll in the baking dish. Repeat until all chicken rolls are secured with toothpicks, covered with bread crumbs and placed in the baking dish. Before placing the dish in the oven, spray the chicken rolls with nonstick cooking spray. This will help make the bread crumbs and crust more crispy. Bake chicken for approximately 35 minutes or until chicken is cooked through.



### OutLook's Bits & Bytes

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## Rice with Vegetables

- 1 cup rice
- 2 1/4 cup water
- Yellow pepper
- Orange pepper
- Broccoli raab leaves
- Toasted pine nuts



Bring water to a boil and pour rice into pot, reduce to a simmer and cover. Follow cooking instructions on the container. Have the broccoli raab leaves cleaned and set aside to dry. Toast the pine nuts so more flavor is extracted, and cut yellow and orange peppers into a small dice. Once the rice is ready to serve, mix in the leaves so they absorb the heat and wilt slightly. Then mix in the peppers and pine nuts.

## Brussels Sprouts Salad

- 16 – 20 Brussels sprouts
- 3 Tbs. balsamic vinegar
- 4 Tbs. olive oil
- salt and pepper to taste



Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Cut sprouts in half and arrange in a baking dish. Mix the salt, pepper and vinegar in a bowl and whisk until salt is dissolved. Slowly whisk in the olive oil and pour the mixture over the Brussels sprouts. Place baking dish in the oven and bake for 25 to 30 minutes, turning the sprouts after about 15 minutes to ensure even cooking. Remove from the oven when they are brown and glazed.

The recipes should yield about four servings, giving each guest two chicken rolls and some rice and vegetables. The salad can be prepared ahead of time and served warm or at room temperature.

This is the perfect example of how recipes are guidelines, simply suggestions that can trigger the imagination in the kitchen. For the chicken dish, the cook can use a variety of ham: honey baked ham, smoked ham, prosciutto or black pepper ham. You can use any variety of Swiss cheese. For the rice recipe, the vegetables I included were used because they were the vegetables available in my refrigerator. Different vegetables can be used: green peas, asparagus, red pepper, cherry tomatoes, green onions, sautéed onions or anything else you may have sitting around that needs to be used.

This menu lineup presents an option to typical meat and starch combinations. With chicken cordon bleu, the chicken is spiced up and with the rice you are getting more than starch alone.



*Use up and enjoy all those things you've been saving for a special occasion - start now!*

# Flowering Maple: The Wannabe Houseplant

By Neil Moran

If you're looking for an easy-to-grow flowering houseplant, check out the flowering maple (*Abutilon*). You may know it as Chinese bellflower and Chinese lantern. This is one houseplant that can be easily started by seed indoors in the spring. Whatever you wish to call it, don't call it a slowpoke. Flowering maple is a quick-growing, shrub-like plant (there are also hanging types of flowering maple) that can be started indoors and then be transplanted outside for the summer.

I call it a "wannabe houseplant" because while it truly does like it indoors, it will lose its leaves and flowers as the days grow short in the fall and will need to be cut back when brought inside for the winter. With most of its leaves gone it won't be much to look at over the winter. However, you will enjoy watching it come back to life in the spring.

Flowering maple is generally grown for its interesting flowers that put on a show most of the summer. Flowering maple needs to be cut back to half the size in the fall to keep it going. Otherwise, it is pretty easy to maintain. For something easy and interesting to grow, either from a plant or from seed, you can't beat flowering maple.

**"Flowering maple is a quick-growing, shrub-like plant (there are also hanging types of flowering maple) that can be started indoors and then be transplanted outside for the summer."**

## Meet the Flowering Maples

*Abutilon striatum thompsonii* is the best-known foliage type of flowering maple. This one will reach up to 5 feet tall in about 10 weeks under optimum conditions. *Abutilon megapotamicum* is a hanging type that can be used in a hanging basket or to tie up like a climber. *Abutilon hybridum*, a tree form of the plant, is different from the two above. It grows to about 5 feet high. Varieties to choose from include Canary Bird (yellow flowers), boule de Neige (white), Fireball (red) and Souvenir de Bonn (pink). Abutilons have leaves that look much like a maple and papery flowers resembling lanterns. They flower in shades of pink, red and yellow. Cuttings root easily. As mentioned above, the remedy to leaf and flower drop in the fall is to cut this beast back to half its size. Go ahead, give it a good haircut—it will reward you in the spring with fuller foliage and prettier flowers.



*Put the pill makers out of business - go out there and get some exercise.*

## Houseplant Tip

**Flowering:** Abutilons will flower from April through June outdoors and sporadically indoors. They flower best indoors when in full sun.

**Indoor temps:** They grow well in average (68-72 degree) temperatures indoors. Maintain cooler temperatures in winter (50-60 degrees).

**Growing outdoors:** Abutilons can be planted outdoors in the summer. In most climates they are brought inside for the winter and cut back to half their size.

**Light:** A well-lit area indoors is essential for good flowering. That's unless you just want to cut it back and let it go dormant over the winter, then keep it out of full sun). Outdoors, search for a site with filtered sunlight.

**Humidity:** Spray plant occasionally with a water bottle.

**Water:** Water two to three times a week in spring and summer, reduce to one good drink per week in the winter.

**Feeding:** Feed monthly with an all purpose 20-20-20 fertilizer during the growth stage (early spring to mid-summer). A bloom-type (15-30-15) liquid fertilizer can also be used just prior to flowering. Use both at half strength of the recommended amount.



**Potting:** The bigger the pot, the taller some of these will grow (up to 10 feet). To restrict growth, allow them to become pot-bound in a smaller pot and prune the upper portion of the plant, which will also help them fill out.

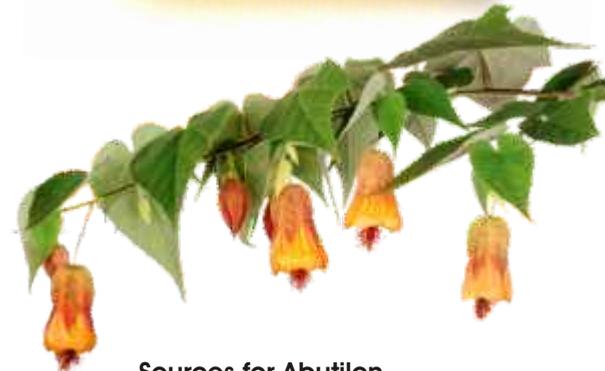
**Repotting:** Re-pot each spring. Be sure the new pot is not too large, which will result in poor flowering.

**Propagation:** Cuttings are a snap, but should be done in the spring. Flowering maple is also easy to start from seeds. Grow at 75 degrees, maintain moisture and expect germination in 21 days.

Neil Moran is author of *North Country Gardening: Simple Secrets to Successful Northern Gardening*. Visit him at [www.neilmoran.com](http://www.neilmoran.com)

## OutLook's Bits & Bytes

Looking for a timer? Log on to [www.e.ggtimer.com](http://www.e.ggtimer.com) and type in the minutes or hours that you'd like and it will show the countdown and beep when the time is up.



Sources for Abutilon Plants and Seed:

[www.Harriseseeds.com](http://www.Harriseseeds.com)  
[www.logees.com](http://www.logees.com)

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Now Open: New Health and Wellness Center

# “Detox” Your Kitchen

By Kater Leatherman

Within the four walls of most homes is sacred space, and where it is will be different for everyone. For some, it's their work area; for others, it's the bedroom. Yours might be a creative center that includes an altar. But for anyone who considers their body sacred, maintaining a lean-clean-green kitchen is a must.

Kitchen detox is about more than organizing your cabinets and matching lids to their containers. It's about committing to a more wholesome way of eating and, if your refrigerator and pantry is cluttered, dirty and filled with unhealthy food, then you won't be able to support this.

Creating a healthy kitchen is a three-step process. First, clear the clutter. By doing this, you can see what you have, what needs to go and what you want to keep. Second, clean everything thoroughly. Third, organize, restock and replace where necessary.

As we move into a new season, now is a good time to take an inventory of your kitchen. Here are eight guidelines:

1. Empty your pantry. If something has chemical additives, artificial preservatives, hydrogenated oils, harmful sweeteners, or anything that you can't pronounce, throw it out. If you are really serious about changing your eating habits, toss the white stuff: flour, sugar and rice. If you want to keep it on hand, buy organic. Then clean the shelves and restock your pantry with healthier canned and processed foods.

2. Weed out your herbs and spices. Also check the dates on the labels; you may have spices, condiments and processed foods that date back to the Reagan administration. If the basil, tarragon, oregano and rosemary are army green in color, then it is bitter and will ruin the taste of anything that you put it in. If something smells rancid, throw it out unless you think your body is a garbage disposal. From now on, store your dried herbs and spices in the refrigerator.



**“Kitchen detox is about more than organizing your cabinets and matching lids to their containers. It’s about committing to a more wholesome way of eating....”**

3. Pitch the obvious food clutter from your refrigerator and freezer, i.e., anything that is moldy, rancid and, especially, old. After cleaning your fridge with soap and water, begin to restock it with “live” healthier food. When grocery shopping, spend the majority of your money in the perimeters of the store. This is where you will find the best value for your overall health - fresh produce, organic meat, chicken, seafood, whole grain breads and dairy products (if you can digest the latter). Most processed foods, i.e., canned, frozen or prepackaged, are located in the interior aisles. Buy the healthier versions and, if something isn't organic, choose brands that say “natural.”

4. Every cabinet and drawer also needs to be cleaned out. If you have 30 containers, give away 15. Discard chipped glasses, cracked bowls and plates, broken gadgets, utensils that are hard to use and anything that you haven't used for the last five years. This will also give you room to store some of the things that are cluttering up your counter space.

5. Clean out your recipe box, keeping the ones you want and that align with how you want to eat now. To create space, keep the cookbooks that you use regularly and give away the rest.

6. Store leftover food in see-through containers. To save space, use Lazy Susans for vitamins, spices and canned goods. Put things that you don't use often in cupboards that are harder to reach such as the turkey roaster, 40-cup coffee urn and ice cream maker.

7. Wean yourself from toxic cleaning chemicals that are stored under the sink. Replace them with products that won't harm you, your family or the environment. Many of those familiar brands have come out with green products that are very effective.

8. If your kitchen is looking a little long in the tooth, a fresh coat of paint can work wonders. So will an attractive lamp on the kitchen counter if you have overhead fluorescent lighting. A throw rug can improve the appearance of any floor that needs updating. Hide the trash can under the sink and get brooms and mops up off the floor. Hang an attractive poster on the wall and thin out the pictures and other stuff that clutters your refrigerator.

*This article is from Kater Leatherman's book “MOVING ON: Feel Lighter, Liberated, More Live!” To order a copy, or to read the articles from her column in the Capital: Kater on the Homefront - go to [www.katerleatherman.com](http://www.katerleatherman.com)*

*How are you doing on completing that “to do” list?*



# Your LEGAL TEAM

Robert R. Smith, Esq. and Gilda O. Karpouzian, Esq., are practicing lawyers in Maryland with over 30 years of experience. Their answers below are based on assumptions that Maryland law applies. Mr. Smith can be contacted at 410 268-5600 or [info@fjbslaw.com](mailto:info@fjbslaw.com) and Ms. Karpouzian can be contacted at 410 280-8864.

## Dear Legal Team:

*My husband's daughter is, at the age of 20-something, not a nice person. She uses and abuses her dad to the point that I want nothing to do with her. He of course doesn't see it. He is leaving everything to her -- lock, stock and barrel. I get nothing. This after providing nursing care for the last five years as he's in declining health. We've been married for 10 years. Do I have any rights at all?*

## Dear Spouse:

This is an important topic for all of us who have aging parents, and for those of us who are reaching the golden years ourselves. The topic, which is the big elephant sitting in everyone's living room, is estate planning. It behooves all of us to sit down and discuss these issues so problems do not arise later when it is harder to deal with them. An example would be doing powers of attorney while everyone is well instead of having an illness or injury suddenly occur and finding no one is authorized to act for that person.

Your inquiry raises a number of issues. First, if you have property, you have to determine how each property is titled. Is the property titled jointly or individually? If you own your home, how is the home titled? In Maryland, husband and wife can hold title to real property as tenancy by the entirety, which means that when one spouse dies the surviving spouse receives the property in full without the need to go through probate. Your husband's last will and testament may also govern as well. If you continue to be married, under Maryland law, your husband can not disinherit you, unless he dies without any assets titled in his name.

Assuming that your husband does not place his assets into a trust and that there are assets under his name at his death, you may receive your share. Your husband may designate a beneficiary to receive his liquid assets, such as bank accounts (pay upon death) and investments, life insurance, etc. If your husband names others as beneficiaries on his accounts or designates others to receive the liquid asset upon his death, assuming that such assets are titled in his name alone, you may not receive the assets that have a designation of beneficiary. The designated beneficiary will receive such property.

Please note that if your husband is competent, for example, he may title all of his assets in his children's names, leaving nothing for you to receive. However, any jointly titled property may still remain to be addressed and divided and for you to receive your share.

Please note that this is a general answer that does not cover specific facts and that you, with your specific questions that address your facts, should consult a lawyer. With respect to estate planning, we recommend that you consult an attorney and discuss these issues along with having a will, a living will and powers of attorney that are up to date.

## Dear Legal Team:

*Not sure if you can help me with this one, but maybe you could steer me in the direction of someone who could. We live on a great street that just invites walkers. Unfortunately, many of them come with dogs attached. At least half do not follow the protocol of the day and clean up after their pets unless they know they're being observed. We have a very small yard with interesting plants that gives us many hours of enjoyment. We've spoken to a number of pet owners and have tried to keep it light and non-accusatory. They're not listening. Much as we don't want to do it is there some legal action that we can take?*

## Dear Yard Owner:

One of the joys of living in a neighborhood is having neighbors; one of the problems of living in a neighborhood is having neighbors. We all have to get along and as you have found, some neighbors can sometimes be quite rude and cause you unnecessary problems. We hope that each of us will do the right thing and clean up after our pets. In your case this has not happened. An obvious solution would be for you and your neighbor to produce a dialogue toward seeking a mutual resolution of the matter. This avoids the most costly alternative of hiring a lawyer and seeking legal action. Also, there are laws in most counties and cities prohibiting the owner of an animal from allowing their pet to be a public nuisance or cause a public nuisance condition. These laws are often enforced by animal control and there is a complaint process. Under these laws complaints can be filed, and an animal control officer can pursue an animal running at large on public property or the exterior premises of private property. Violations of these laws subject the offender to a civil fine and can be \$250 or \$500 for repeat offenders. Proceedings on the citations are held in court where the owner and witnesses must appear.

*Legal information, is not the same as legal advice about your specific circumstances. We try to be accurate and useful. We strongly recommend that you consult a lawyer to find out what is appropriate to your particular situation. We are not giving specific legal advice to you. These answers do not create an attorney-client relationship.*

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# Working at Home By Gina G. Courbron



**“There are plenty of personal touches you can add to make your office a fun, inviting and productive space.”**



**OutLook's**  
*Bits & Bytes*

If you're giving away or donating a computer and want all of your personal information removed, go to [www.killdisk.com](http://www.killdisk.com) Much of it is free, but there is a charge for the deluxe version.



**T**he home office has come a long way from years past. Millions of Americans now work from home in some capacity and the numbers are growing. Home offices run the gamut from providing a completely functional space for full-time careers to bill-paying areas to a place for doing homework. So, whether you opt to decorate your office in the same style as the rest of your home or choose a totally different look, your home office should reflect your personality and interests, while being both functional and attractive.

There are plenty of personal touches you can add to make your office a fun, inviting and productive space. Here are some to try:

1. Paint the walls a color that makes you feel good and also enhances the space.
2. Consider using fabric, curtains or decorative screens as an interesting and attractive backdrop.
3. Match your office accessories to your décor by using similar colors, finishes and accessories.
4. Cork boards, white boards and blackboards are perfect for posting reminders, calendars and motivational messages. It's also an easy way to track important appointments and do lists.
5. Have a basket or container with crayons, paper and games on hand to keep children occupied while you finish work.
6. If pets are a part of your life, designate a comfortable spot for them.
7. Use flowers or green plants to create ambiance and add color to the room.
8. Hang a mirror or artwork that you love and creatively display collectibles.
9. Include personal photos, a favorite poster or frame a child's artwork and hang it on the wall.
10. If there's room, add seating for visitors and for meetings.
11. If you are working in a basement or a room that lacks character, create interest by adding a colorful area rug.

Look for furnishings that serve dual functions like an armoire that can store files and house the media equipment at the same time or an ottoman that serves as seating and storage. Stackable wire or wicker file baskets are good alternatives to boring, metal file cabinets. Or consider painting old file cabinets a color that coordinates with the room. Think vertically by adding shelving, cabinets and bookcases over your work area to increase space and accessibility for frequently used items. Place all things that are essential to your work within easy reach of your office chair. Store other materials and equipment you use less frequently in a nearby location.

#### **Musts:**

1. **Hide it!** Try to hide wires, cords and the plugs from computer, printer, lamps, fax, copy machine and answering machine. Home center stores sell devices that cover all those unsightly cords and match the décor too!
2. **Store it!** An efficient workspace is not cluttered, so make sure you have plenty of storage space. It is not safe or visually appealing to maneuver around stacks of papers piled on the floor.
3. **Get comfortable!** Comfort is essential for doing a good job if you work at home. Make certain you have a comfortable office chair and that your computer keyboard is at a comfortable height. You can attach a headset to your office phone to avoid a stiff neck and to free up your hands.

Putting your personal imprint on your home office sparks creativity, prevents you from feeling isolated and makes you feel good. Remember, you're the boss and have fun decorating your home office.



Gina can be reached at GG Design Inspirations at 410 672-7224 or log on to her Web site at [www.ggdesigninspirations.com](http://www.ggdesigninspirations.com)

*Enjoy the ride - this isn't a dress rehearsal.*

# Ten Not-So-Secret Ways to Longevity

By E. Downing

- 1. Exercise.** You've heard this one many times, but are you doing anything about it? Exercise can be as simple as going for a 20-30 minute walk or can be as challenging as taking up tennis or racquet ball. There's also swimming, golf, hiking or biking with one of the local groups, or joining a gym. Look around you. The most fit and vital people you know are the ones who are involved in some sort of exercise program. The good news is that you get to choose what fits your lifestyle.
- 2. Relationships.** Friends and family. Stay connected. Do whatever it takes to stay connected to family, which often means just enjoy them, even though you may not always agree. For friends, it's not that difficult to get a group of like-minded people together for a book discussion group, walking group or bridge group.
- 3. Eat right.** Like you haven't heard that before. But make an honest effort to eat less sugar-loaded foods or prepared foods such as convenience meals found in the frozen food section. Read labels. Try making meals from scratch as in homemade salad dressing with fresh greens. Avoid drinks other than pure natural water or tea – the flavor selection of teas is endless. There's bound to be one out there that you like and it can be served either iced or hot.
- 4. Sleep.** Don't overdo it, though. Studies show that most of us need around eight hours per night. Go to bed at the same time each night and get up at the same time each morning. You'll find that you sleep better if you're on a schedule. And if you must take a nap during the day, make it a power nap, not to exceed 20 minutes. You'll feel refreshed and it won't interfere with a night's sleep.
- 5. Simplify.** Whether that means cleaning out the clutter that you've carefully collected and preserved over the years or moving to a more manageable home, now is the time.
- 6. Cut stress.** What is it that creates anxiety at this point in your life? Too many obligations perhaps? Then weed some of them out. This is the age when we should be having fun. We shouldn't be loading ourselves up with countless "to do" lists.
- 7. Guard health.** Don't take good health for granted. Get the checkups you know you should have. That includes your dentist, eye doctor and family practitioner. If you're on any meds, work with your doctor on how to reduce them.
- 8. Hobbies.** Isn't there something you've always wanted to try -- ceramics, knitting, woodworking, French? Now is the time to do it and classes are offered in just about anything that you can think of at many of the local colleges or senior centers.
- 9. Something new.** Get out of your comfort zone by signing up for a trip to Antarctica or a walking tour of the deserts of the Southwest or take a class on writing a memoir while visiting Ireland. Sign up for summer camp to learn a new skill. Studies show that people taking on new challenges remain more vital.
- 10. TV.** Turn it off. How will that increase longevity? You will have to find something else to fill that time like going for a walk, meeting with a friend, reading a book or preparing your next meal from scratch. In all of recorded history, it's unlikely that anyone on their death bed was quoted as saying, "I didn't get to watch enough TV."

## OutLook's *Bits & Bytes*

Have you ever sent an e-mail unintentionally, perhaps it wasn't finished or you hadn't proofread it or it went to the wrong person? To avoid this sometimes embarrassing mistake, don't fill in the address until it's ready to go.



# It's Not Too Early for the Cole Crops

By Neil Moran

If you're looking to get off to an early start in the garden this spring with some nutritional vegetables that don't mind a chill, try these really cool veggies: broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and Brussel sprouts. They're cool, not only because they're healthy and delicious, but because they don't mind the cold. You can start them early in the season when the nights around the Bay are still a bit chilly, or plant a little later for a fall harvest.

Broccoli comes most readily to mind as one of the most prolific producers in the cool weather. In fact, if I were stranded on a deserted island and had a choice of only two or three veggies to live on, this would be one of them. I might get sick of eating broccoli, but I'd never run out of it!

Some varieties of broccoli can be sown in the early spring for an early harvest. One variety, broccoli raab, or broccolini, is an Italian variety that can be planted in early spring. It will thrive in the cool spring weather and produce an early crop of broccoli. The variety I plant every year is Green Goliath. I'm usually in no hurry to get this one in the ground and no hurry to harvest it later on, because it can take a severe frost in the fall.

Brussel sprouts seems to be a vegetable that is going out of favor with people, or perhaps it never was a favorite. Yet, it really is delicious boiled up and smothered with a cheese sauce. I always enjoy going out in the garden on a cool, sunny day in the fall with a sharp knife in my hand and slicing off the "little cabbages." Brussel sprouts can be started much like broccoli. However, they require good, rich soil and are a little heavier feeder than broccoli. Amend the soil with good, rich compost or well-rotted manure. Fertilize with a side dressing of 12-12-12 or Miracle Grow a couple of times during the season. Organic gardeners can use fish emulsions and other natural products. Be patient also. It will be late in the season before you see the sprouts forming along the stem of the plant. The lower leaves can be sliced away to allow a little more light and air movement.

Mark Twain called cauliflower "cabbage with a college education." Cauliflower is not only a sophisticated vegetable, but a real treat on the dinner table. Unless you purchase a specific late-season variety, plant this one early. It sets a head much better (and bigger) in cool weather.

About late June, start keeping an eye on your cauliflower plants. From deep inside the developing leaves will appear a pure white floret. When you see this, take the leaves and loosely tie them up around the top of the plant. This will effectively blanch the cauliflower and keep it from yellowing. Choose Snow Crown Hybrid for a late fall harvest.





Cabbage is grown much like the other cole crops. The thing with cabbages is they can split in hot weather or if allowed to overripen. Also, they don't store well and it is sometimes hard to eat it all up, although it makes great sauerkraut. For a late season harvest, consider Storage # 4 from Johnny's Selected Seeds.

All of the cole crops mentioned above need some elbow room, so plant them up to 18 inches apart. Good air circulation will discourage slugs. And they all can be started the same way: either direct seeded in the ground or inside in peat pots or small containers. If you are starting them indoors in containers, simply sow the seeds in a sterile potting medium. Use a grow light or place near a sunny window to avoid the stretch that occurs from lack of good light. Start cole crops four to six weeks before you plan on setting them out in the garden. Harden the plants off by gradually adjusting them to the cool temps outside. I usually plant my cole crops outside on an overcast day to avoid sunscald. Or if it can't be avoided, lightly cover the plants for a few days with some straw or newspaper.

Cabbage worms and cabbage loopers are a real draw with the cole crops, especially cabbage and broccoli. Dipel dust contains Bt, a biological control preferred by organic gardeners. It is very effective at controlling worm-type critters and it's also nontoxic to humans. It comes in powder form and should be applied per the recommendations on the label. Broccoli can also be soaked in cold water with a little salt added; the loopers will float to the top instead of ending up on the dinner table.



So if you're looking for a reason to be cool, at least in the garden, plant these cole crops. They'll provide you with a nice harvest long after the last ear of sweet corn and tomato is picked.

Sources for the previously mentioned vegetables:

**HenryFields**

513 354-1494

[www.HenryFields.com](http://www.HenryFields.com)

**Gurneys**

[www.Gurneys.com](http://www.Gurneys.com)

**Johnny's Select Seeds**

[www.Johnnyseeds.com](http://www.Johnnyseeds.com)



*Neil Moran is the author of the recently released Store to Garden: 101 Ways to Make the Most of Garden Store Purchases. You can visit his Web site at [www.neilmoran.com](http://www.neilmoran.com)*





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[www.Gazelle.com](http://www.Gazelle.com) buys used electronics and if you go to [sears.gazelle.com](http://sears.gazelle.com) or [costco.gazelle.com](http://costco.gazelle.com) you will receive a gift certificate instead of cash for your electronic castoffs.

## Be Prepared: A Good Motto for Any Age

By Maureen Smith

I envy my daughters because they were totally independent and self-supporting before marriage. I see the confidence this has given them in their lives. Growing up in the South, it was not considered proper (by my mother, anyway) for a young lady to have her own apartment while living in the same city as her parents. Therefore, I went from the security of my family to that of my husband and never really experienced "making it on my own." Have times changed, or what!

Many of my friends, who unfortunately had the same unliberated upbringing, are now having health problems or losing their spouses. My newly widowed friends tell me the paperwork they have to deal with is overwhelming; it can interfere with the grieving process that is so important.

This has made me think how lost I would be without my husband. Through all our years together (50 in February), I have been the saver of money and he has been the manager of money. Being raised by parents who lived through the Great Depression, I was a natural for the saver job. Consequently, he has the big picture of our finances and I have the little picture. I know we have trusts and IRAs and accounts out there, but I don't know how quickly I could find all these papers and documents if I had to.

We have done all the standard things we're told to do such as living wills, anatomical gift forms, powers of attorney for estate and health care, property agreements, life insurance, distribution of assets, etc.

With the help of a local law firm, these papers are now all nicely packaged in a leather notebook. Keep in mind that elder law attorneys have recommendations from competent financial planners and tax accountants. I would certainly benefit from their services.

Because of my anxiety, my dear husband has taken the time to write out a list of all of our assets, a "roadmap" of where they can be accessed and who he would suggest to contact for advice. This does give me great peace of mind. We have even started paying the bills together so I can better appreciate the money needed to manage our affairs. I am usually much more attuned to the price of a head of lettuce than the electric bill. There are monthly mortgage payments, estimated and annual tax payments, credit card payments, insurance payments and utility payments. Whew!

My standing joke is that I would have to marry within the week after my husband departed, because I wouldn't remember the garbage pickup days. However, there would be some comfort in knowing, that if the situation were reversed, he might never again change the sheets or find the mayo in the fridge.

Seriously, if you haven't prepared for living life without your spouse, you'll never regret making time now to take steps similar to those I have described here. 



*Maureen retired from the state legislature in 2001. Since then, when not on the tennis courts, she volunteers her time at the Annapolis Visitors Center and to the charitable activities of The Assistance League of the Chesapeake. She can be reached at [rsmith0636@comcast.net](mailto:rsmith0636@comcast.net)*



# Spreading Literacy By Keeping Books Alive

By Buzz Stillinger

**B**ooks for International Goodwill (B.I.G.) has been collecting and sending used books to schools, libraries and community centers in more than 30 countries over the past 14 years. On April 9, 2010, B.I.G. and its parent organization, the Parole Rotary Club in Annapolis, will be hosting a public celebration to celebrate the distribution of their 4 millionth book.

B.I.G. receives donated books from area schools, libraries and individuals. They are collected and sorted by volunteers in their warehouse on Marlboro Road in Lothian (the Triangle Tobacco Warehouse at Wayson's Corner). From there the books are prepared for shipment to developing countries overseas and to underserved populations in the U.S. The books are shipped in container loads when going overseas, achieving the very low shipping cost of about 15 cents per book. Transportation costs are paid for by the Parole Rotary Club, other Rotary Clubs, churches and, in some cases, the recipients themselves. B.I.G., however, provides the largest amount of funds through periodic book sales at its warehouse, where prudent book lovers can inexpensively pick up valuable books that have been donated but have limited use overseas. The next book sale will be March 13 at 1325 Marlboro Road in Lothian.



## 4 Million Books and Still Counting

In addition to spreading literacy in less developed countries, the program keeps tons of used books that still have value, out of local landfills. It also provides volunteers a chance to do something tangible for others. Today a teacher in Kenya can show students a map of their country for the first time. A recipient in Afghanistan writes, "It is this type of activity that brings us hope."

The April 9 celebration will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. at Sojourner Douglas College, 135 Stepneys Lane in Edgewater (routes 2 and 214). A guest donation of \$20 is suggested, and there will be free book bags, hors d'oeuvres and libations. There will also be a silent auction of collectible books and related literary items including a selection of books signed by their authors, and a raffle of a Kindle. For reservations contact Jeanne Hawn at 410 544-1484 or [jeanne17@aol.com](mailto:jeanne17@aol.com) For additional information contact Steve Frantzich at 410 239-6865 or [frantzic@usna.edu](mailto:frantzic@usna.edu)



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Before purchasing that toy for a favorite grandchild, log on to [www.HealthyToys.org](http://www.HealthyToys.org) for more information than you want to know about what that toy is made from.

*This is not the time to be winding down - it's the time to explore more options and opportunities.*

## A Log on Blogs *By Jessica Duncan*

**H**ave you heard? Unless you live under a rock or a log, you've definitely heard the word "blog" bantered about on the Internet and television. If you're a newcomer to the blogosphere, here's an introduction to what you've been missing.

### A new morning custom

Some people begin their morning routine by settling down to breakfast with a cup of coffee and the newspaper to catch up on the latest headlines. Others, however, have changed their routine over the past several years to include logging on to the computer to catch the newest entries on their favorite blogs. The time spent glancing at blog updates may be informative or it may be a guilty pleasure. Either way, it is a momentary escape into the ideas, findings or photographs of others. The bloggers you read every day may live in your neighborhood or on the other side of the globe. Regardless, when routinely reading about their lives and interests you may seem a bit closer or more connected to someone who is a perfect stranger.

### Is there a blog for me?

Judging from its name, a blog sounds like a foreign substance that could be hard to relate to. In fact, a blog, which is short for Web log, could not be more personal since it is a diary of sorts, continuously updated by a person or group. Containing dated entries, blogs often focus upon a specific topic. Other blogs are dedicated to the happenings of the author's life and include their photographs, musings and other daily concerns. Regardless of the type of blog, by nature it often feels as if you have a special glimpse into the blogger's thoughts through a virtual journal.

With the right motivation anyone can begin a blog and possibly become an inspiration or at least entertainment, for those who happen upon the site. This brings up something to remember when stumbling upon new blogs in the blogosphere: editing and fact-checking are not required. As you read others' suggestions or opinions, you might have some of your own. The wonderful thing about blogs is they often encourage their readers to instantly share their comments, positive or otherwise. This may lead to further comments and discussions between readers and thus a greater connection to and an interaction with the blogger and other readers.

**"With the right motivation anyone can begin a blog and possibly become an inspiration or at least entertainment, for those who happen upon the site."**

Blogs, like the people who read them, come in all shapes and sizes, discussing topics that range from travel, politics and design to baking, health and cultural events. So yes, if you have an interest, any interest at all, there is a blog for you!

### Completely Smitten

For many readers, blogs can serve as an inspiration to try new things, including food and recipes. In her blog, *Smitten Kitchen* ([www.smittenkitchen.com](http://www.smittenkitchen.com)) Deb Perelman invites you into her kitchen and her life. Through her vivid photography and quirky narration, Mrs. Pearlman's weekly posts make you want to attempt new things in the kitchen, or at least try a bite of what she has already prepared. *Smitten Kitchen* is focused on the recipes she creates, which are interwoven with her culinary musings, ideas and anecdotes about her family life in New York City. Her unpretentious recipes and tone make her top cooking blog accessible to cooks of all levels and those who simply appreciate food. One could get lost on Mrs. Pearlman's blog for hours reading her stories and exploring her mouth-watering recipes. Wonderfully simple and clean there are even a couple of carefully laid out sidebars - one suggesting necessary resources and another with tips. The *Smitten Kitchen* has all the elements that make a blog appealing and it is a reliable and sometimes addictive diversion into someone else's world. If this does not inspire you to try something new in the kitchen, or at least make your mouth water, I don't know what will!

So, pardon the pun, but this review is just a "taste" of the intriguing blogs available for your reading enjoyment. Stay tuned and in the next issue I will highlight other blogs that may not leave your stomach grumbling, but may quench your thirst for something good to read.

*Jessica is a full-time teacher and a blogger. She enjoys sitting down to her computer with a cup of coffee to read up on fellow bloggers. She can be reached at [Jessicaroeper@yahoo.com](mailto:Jessicaroeper@yahoo.com)*

### Want to Know More?

OK, you've seen the movie (*Julie and Julia*) and know a little about blogs. And you've read this article. Now what? If this has tweaked your interest in the exciting world of the blogosphere, here's more information:

### How do I start my own blog?

Entire books are written about this subject and instructions are beyond the scope of an article. However, it is relatively easy for anyone to start a simple blog, if you want to put the time into designing and maintaining one. Check out these books for more help:

- *Blogging for Dummies* by Susannah Gardner and Shane Barley
- *The Everything Blogging Book: Publish Your Ideas, Get Feedback and Create Your Own Worldwide Network* by Eliza Risdahl
- *Blogging for Bliss: Crafting Your Own Online Journal: A Guide for Crafters, Artists & Creative's of All Kinds* by Tara Frey

After you've educated yourself, if you want more assistance, consider taking a noncredit class in blogging, such as:

- [www.ed2go.com](http://www.ed2go.com) offers online classes on starting your own blog
- Local community college courses

### How do I locate blogs written about what interests me?

- Any search engine will assist you in finding interesting blogs, no matter what your interests. In fact, Google has its own search engine for blogs [www.blogsearch.google.com](http://www.blogsearch.google.com) that offers both basic and advanced search options.
- If you find a blog that you particularly like, check out the "blog roll" usually listed as a sidebar on the blog's main page. This blog roll provides links to other blogs of a similar nature and will open your eyes to many new possibilities.
- Check out *OutLook by the Bay* for its new regular feature highlighting blogs of particular interest and high quality. 



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[www.whitepages.com](http://www.whitepages.com)



## One Minute to Midnight: Kennedy, Khrushchev, and Castro on the Brink of Nuclear War

By Michael Dobbs,  
A.A. Knopf (2008)

More than a century ago, Feb. 15, 1898, the USS Maine exploded in the harbor at Havana, Cuba. “Remember the Maine” became a battle cry that aroused the nation to support a war against Spain to free Cuba. It was an ideal that American diplomatic and economic actions would eventually squander, and it came back to haunt us on the morning of Oct. 16, 1962.

Michael Dobbs gives us a minute-by-minute description of the harrowing 13 days of the Cuban missile crisis. For those born before 1950, this book will be a chilling reminder of how you, the world and the USA, were almost engaged in a nuclear war. For those born later and enjoying history, it will seem an anxious parallel to how several presidents, diplomats and intelligence officials have stumbled and misled the nation into wars for the past 60 years.

The author takes advantage of the new declassification of national and international information along with the willingness of former military and diplomatic personnel in the USA, Russia and Cuba to now speak freely about their actions and experiences. It enables him to reveal and interpret events not previously known.

This book is a frightening story of three nations' leaders in Havana, Washington and Moscow with widely differing strategies and personal views. They are struggling to cope with the stress of a crisis spiraling out of control. Diplomatic communications in those days were slow, and the hubris and incompetence of many of their advisers were rampant. Missiles were being armed, spy planes shot down and blockades set up. Soviet and American armies were being deployed or readied, and Russian submarines and cargo ships were engaged on the high seas by American naval vessels.

Michael Dobbs has created a gripping historical account of this nuclear standoff that is as tense as a suspense novel. He penetrates deeply into the personalities of Kennedy, Khrushchev and Castro, as well as the inferior and sometimes fanatical counsel of U.S. advisers like LeMay, Johnson, McNamara and others. We learn how a messianic Castro maneuvers both Kennedy and Khrushchev like puppets. Even the president's own brother, Robert, reveals his skewed thinking when he proposes blowing up an American ship in Havana harbor to create a pretext to attack Cuba.

In the end, both Kennedy and Khrushchev emerge as leaders who grasp the essentials and find a way to prevent a disastrous nuclear war. They both had experienced warfare personally and knew its horrors firsthand. We are fortunate that they were finally able to escape the fog of impending war before the Cuban missile crisis engulfed all of the antagonists at the stroke of midnight.

This book will both fascinate and inform you. It will give you pause for thought when you contemplate the diplomatic, intelligence and military crises currently in progress.

~ Phil Ferrara

## Fifty Miles from Tomorrow: A Memoir of Alaska and the Real People

By William L. Iggiagruk Hensley  
Sarah Crichton Books, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2009

The title is what intrigued me. What was *Fifty Miles from Tomorrow*? Of course, you probably have figured out by now that the town in Alaska where the author was born is 50 miles from the International Date Line, hence it was 50 miles from tomorrow.

That is just the beginning of discoveries you will find in this book. Although many of us in the “lower 48” can say we have visited Alaska, by cruise ship, ferry, train, recreational vehicle, car or on foot, chances are you do not really know the “real people” of this state.

William Hensley, a native Alaskan and a member of the Inupiaq tribe who was born in the northern area of Kotzebue Sound, gives us his insight into the struggles, hardships, beauty and joys of this little-known land. Most of the books written about Alaska have been written by “outsiders” or settlers.

Hensley's devotion to his native state is very evident as he sacrificed many comforts, as well as his first marriage, to working for the rights of the native people. Hensley spent years lobbying the United States government, battling the big oil interests, traveling and speaking to countless groups to end up securing for the native Alaskan people 44 million acres and nearly \$1 billion for their use. This way they could control their land, their traditions and their destiny.

Several pages are even dedicated to describing the Inupiaq writing and pronunciation. This alphabet is twenty-four letters and combinations, some of which represent the same sound as the English equivalents. There is also a glossary at the end of the book with Inupiaq words and their English meaning. This glossary was helpful to me when reading the book, as the author uses many native words.

This is not a book to be read all at one time, or probably one that you can't wait to get to. If taken in smaller doses, thought about and enjoyed, the book will give you a much greater understanding of our fellow Americans in the far north.

As they say in Inupiaq, “nakuurg.” It is good.

~ Peggy Kiefer

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# Spring Foods To Cleanse the Body

By Ellen Kittredge



Newness and freshness are two hallmarks of spring that we can see reflected in the world around us each year as this season approaches. New blossoms of crocuses and other flowers start popping up through the grass seemingly overnight, right along with the fresh and pale-green leaves budding from tree branches. The birds start singing more vibrantly and urgently, and fresh spring rains come frequently to wash away any snow left from winter.

In response to this natural cleansing and awakening process that is happening around us in nature, we are often inspired to take a fresh and new look at our houses, our kitchens, our bedrooms, garages or whatever else in our lives could use a good thorough spring cleaning. Interestingly enough, the innate desire to clean our external environment can also be expressed internally.

Spring is a natural time of detoxification for the body. Springtime is when we cleanse the body of any excess fat and mucus that built up over the winter. Just as we open the windows of our houses to bring in fresh spring air, we offer the body a chance for renewal and rebirth by eating the nourishing foods that spring has to offer. And what are these fresh and cleansing spring-time foods?

If we look around us we'll find that the foods that are just perfect for the body at this time of year are literally popping up all around us. My favorite example of a truly cleansing and detoxifying spring food is dandelion greens. This year instead of spraying your yards to get rid of this "weed," harvest a few dandelion leaves and add them to your salad. Make sure to do it before they flower. Yes, the dandelion greens will be bitter-tasting, but this is exactly what the body needs to cleanse itself. Bitter foods stimulate the liver to provide the detoxification that the body needs at this time of year. Another option is to harvest the dandelion greens and boil them up with a pinch of salt to make a hot tea. Or, sauté them with a little olive oil and garlic, much as you might do with spinach.

Not sure you want to experiment with dandelion greens this year? There are many other foods that are wonderful at cleansing and supporting the body in the springtime. Try incorporating the foods listed below into your diet and notice enhanced digestion, increased weight loss and reduced seasonal allergies. The body will naturally provide the balance and healing necessary during this time of year, given of course that we fortify our diets. Below are a few foods to try:

**Fruits:** apples, grapefruit, dry fruits, lemons, limes, papayas, pear, strawberries, raspberries and pomegranates.

**Vegetables:** A wide variety of different veggies are appropriate this time of year, but the best include sprouts, asparagus, cabbage, carrots, celery, collard greens, dandelions, garlic, green beans, peppers (hot and sweet), kale, lettuce, mushrooms, mustard greens, onions, parsley, peas, spinach, swish chard, radishes, turnips, watercress and beets.

**Teas:** cinnamon, ginger, black tea, green tea, strawberry leaf, dandelion and orange peel.

*Ellen Kittredge, is a nutrition and health counselor practicing in Annapolis and Bethesda, who helps her clients experience real and lasting weight loss, eliminate cravings, gain more energy and improve overall health and well-being. She can be contacted at: [www.ellenkittredge.com](http://www.ellenkittredge.com)*



# Simplify Your Life with an Employee Handbook

By John C. Kelly



As a small-business owner, you probably think that an employee handbook is something only for large businesses. Of course, a handbook is essential for large businesses, but it can be a valuable asset and timesaver for companies with as few as five to 10 employees. By the time you have 15 employees, it becomes a necessity. Some small-business owners resist preparing an employee handbook because they want the freedom to change their minds. I think this is a mistake and that a handbook should be prepared sooner rather than later. When I owned my company, I started compiling a handbook when I had around 10 employees, and I was amazed at how it simplified my life.

Employees expect and need consistent rules, and an employee handbook is the easiest way to provide them. In addition, an employee handbook avoids wasted time by not having to repeat the same information again and again, minimizes misunderstandings, minimizes legal problems and protects company property and trade secrets. A good handbook will turn ambiguous ad hoc rules into unambiguous formal rules. It will allow you to run a company with 75-plus persons without a full-time human resources person. As Ron Edwards of Hague Quality Water of Maryland rightly states, "There are just too many opportunities for misunderstandings if expectations are not written down in clear and simple English."

Ron, a local business owner, has done an excellent job of preparing an employee handbook for his company of 25 employees, which includes the following sections:

1. Employment
2. Employment Status and Records
3. Employee Benefit Programs
4. Timekeeping/Payroll
5. Work Conditions & Hours
6. Employee Conduct & Disciplinary Action

The employment section discusses such legal items as equal employment opportunity, anti-harassment, anti-discrimination and immigration law compliance. Also included are outside employment, conflict of interest and nondisclosure of company secrets. Employment status and records defines employment categories, access to personnel records and performance evaluation procedures. Employee benefits focuses on vacation, sick time, holidays, jury duty, education assistance, retirement plans and insurance. Timekeeping/payroll describes compensation, termination procedures and timekeeping records. Work conditions and hours describes work hours, lunch time, overtime pay, travel expenses, computer, Internet and e-mail usage, work safety and workplace monitoring. Employee conduct and disciplinary action lays out the rules

relating to drug and alcohol use, smoking, personal appearance and other corporate expectations.

Of course, the organization and contents of a handbook for your company will vary depending on the nature of your business, the number of employees and the mix of salaried versus hourly employees. In any event, the above outline should serve as a good framework for things you want to consider including in your handbook. Writing an employee handbook is an iterative process that will most likely begin as an informal collection of internal letters and memos and evolve into the more formal document described above. Once completed, you will want to have each employee sign a statement acknowledging that it has been received and read. Its greatest value will come when you are recruiting and hiring new employees, because it conveys a level of professionalism too often missing in small companies.

As a retired lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force, structure and organization come naturally to Ron. If that is not the case for you, you might want to consider hiring an outside consultant to help you write a handbook for your company. The sooner you do, the easier your business life will become.

John C. Kelley is a counselor at SCORE, "Counselors to America's Small Business," an organization of volunteers affiliated with the Small Business Administration (SBA) who help small businesses, at no charge, achieve success. To request a confidential meeting with a SCORE counselor, to learn more about SCORE or to see a list of upcoming workshops, visit [www.score390.org](http://www.score390.org)

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## Conflict about Conflict

*My husband and I are almost five years into a second marriage for both of us. Mostly, things are good except for how we handle conflicts. He hates to argue and walks away at any sign of disagreement. I think some conflict is healthy, if it is handled correctly. When he clams up and won't talk through our problems, I feel shut out and dismissed. In the end, I think it hurts rather than helps our relationship to avoid issues that may create some heated arguments. How do we solve this difference?*

Take a look at the personal growth section in any bookstore and you'll quickly see that conflict management is a hot topic. Scores of books line the shelves about managing conflict in relationships, business, politics, and almost every area of life. In other words, *conflict happens!* Even seasoned therapists and other "experts" experience *conflict* about the causes and cures for this common problem.

In order to give a comprehensive answer, I'd need much more information. Different theories approach conflict from various angles and we could explore your past, your expectations, etc. However, the following framework borrowed from the business world, may give you fresh insight and foster better interactions.

Research in the field of human relations identifies five strategies for conflict management:

1. **Competition** - using authority or personal power to influence the outcome of a conflict, e.g., "*It's my way or else.*"
2. **Accommodation** - allowing your partner to have his/her way and neglecting your own needs, e.g., "*I give up. You win!*"
3. **Avoidance** - ignoring the conflict and any attempts towards resolution, e.g., "*I don't want to talk about it.*"
4. **Compromise** - resolving the conflict by choosing a solution that is somewhat acceptable to both partners, but not completely satisfying to either, e.g., "*We both give a little and get a little.*"
5. **Collaboration** - using cooperation and problem-solving skills to find a mutually satisfying solution, e.g., "*We find an answer that satisfies each of us. We both win.*"

## Dear Vicki

*Victoria Duncan is a licensed professional counselor who works with individuals and couples to address a full spectrum of client issues. She welcomes your questions at [Victoria@OutLookbytheBay.com](mailto:Victoria@OutLookbytheBay.com)*



While each strategy has pros and cons, people who handle conflict well select and use the one that best fits the situation. For example, you may need to use competition (or force) in dangerous or urgent situations. At the same time, always insisting on our own way is a sure way to evoke resentment and anger. Not a good pick!

As creatures of habits, we become stuck in a comfortable rut,---most often using one or two of these styles although all of them are available to us. While certain questionnaires can help determine your primary style, you can probably identify both your personal favorites and those of your partner just by reviewing that list. Right? I thought so!

Furthermore, can you guess which styles are healthiest for couples? Yep, the last two strategies are your best bet *in most cases*. In particular, collaboration allows us to use our creative problem-solving abilities to foster mutual respect, meaningful rapport and interpersonal intimacy. Hey, that's the good stuff that translates into love.

Hold on a minute before planning to collaborate all the time. It's not that simple. Collaboration requires time and effort. Some disagreements are too trivial to justify time-consuming resolutions. Imagine that you and your partner disagree on which movie to see on the weekend. Accommodating and yielding to your partner's desire to see the latest Oscar-contender may serve you best. Aim for balance and consideration in these types of minor conflicts.

Talk with your husband about the five strategies. Without assigning judgment and blame, determine which go-to strategy each of you most often use. Then discuss your next most frequently used choice. Often, just using a secondary strategy will ease the log jam. Give it a try! Also, seek opportunities for collaboration, building your problem-solving skills and arriving at a win-win solution.

Consistently avoiding conflict or *stonewalling*, with the excuse, "I don't like to argue," undermines a relationship. In a similar manner, the person who dislikes going to a doctor risks their health---- if

they use their distaste as an excuse to avoid dealing with medical concerns. Most of us don't enjoy going to the doctor or dealing with conflict. However, for the health of our body, we overcome our resistance and seek medical care. And for the health of our relationship, we strengthen our bond by resolving differences in a mutually satisfying manner. If necessary, we can agree to disagree with respect in a way that honors our relationship and deepens intimacy.

Keep your eye focused on balance and tolerance. Choose your battles with care, avoid making "mountains out of molehills," and shrug off those minor annoyances. Learn to ask for what you need. Your spouse is not a mind reader. When you voice grievances, use "I" language to communicate rather than "You" language which tends to blame and shame. For example, "I feel (left out, unappreciated, unloved, etc)" rather than, "You are so (thoughtless, inconsiderate, etc)."

If you need more help, seek professional assistance without delay. When conflict escalates, becomes chronic, or is destructive, it erodes those loving feelings and sets up a difficult-to-reverse negative cascade of emotions. For assistance in finding a qualified therapist, ask your physician or a member of the clergy to recommend someone they trust. Clinicians trained in relationship skills include licensed counselors, pastoral counselors, clinical social workers, marriage and family therapists and psychologists.

Finally, remember that happy couples stay connected by communicating with many more positive than negative interactions. So, although conflict is a given, keep the tone in your home upbeat by balancing disagreements with appreciation, gratitude and by having fun together.

Check out these excellent books and audio recordings for more suggestions:

- **Getting the Love You Want** by Harville Hendrix, PhD.
- **The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work** by John Gottman, PhD.
- **Divorce Busting** by Michelle Weiner-Davis
- **Hold Me Tight** by Sue Johnson





## Our Wily New Urban Neighbor, the Fox

The gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*) has been a resident of the New World since the dinosaurs became extinct, but the red fox, often seen in the Bay area, was introduced to this country. The English purportedly brought the red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) over in the early part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century for the purpose of “going to the hounds,” or recreational hunting. So many of the wily creatures escaped the pursuing hounds that they're now almost as common as the original gray foxes. However, there's need for concern for both species.

Shy and cautious, the red fox can measure nearly four feet in length and weigh up to 18 pounds, the gray fox coming in slightly smaller. Both have bushy tails - the red fox distinguished from the gray with his white-tipped tail. The gray fox interestingly is the only member of the dog family capable of climbing trees, which he will do when threatened, in pursuit of his next meal or to rest and observe. His strong legs and hooked claws, used to attack his prey, aid in his scramble up to his observation deck. The gray fox, which is found in most areas of North America, is a year-round resident of the Bay area. It dines on birds, squirrels, rabbits, nuts, berries rodents and, as we learned from the nursery rhyme, the fox loves to be in the hen house. Once actively pursued by irate farmers, the more secure hen houses now discourage a rampaging fox, hopefully endearing him to the farmer as a reliable means of rodent control.

Leaving its burrow at dawn or dusk, the fox's acute hearing and sense of smell help him locate his next meal. He can attain speeds up to 30 miles per hour, making him capable of outrunning much of his prey. Wary of people, foxes have adapted to living close to humans as urban sprawl

continues to encroach into his habitat. If you encounter a fox it is always best, as with any wild animal, to give it wide berth as there is the potential that the animal could be rabid. Rare, but it does occur.

Both the gray fox and the red fox mate once a year, in January or February. The ritual is often announced during the night with loud barks. Up to 10 kits are born in a den in March or April. Leaving the nursery at six months of age, the male, or dog, will move up to 150 miles away, while the vixens stay closer to their original home. Once abundant, the red fox was almost hunted into extinction, but with better regulations in place, the population has stabilized. The cunning fox has managed to adjust to current conditions such as loss of habitat and the lessening of readily available food. As a result, the fox will dine on trash, carrion and even pet food. Once hunted for their pelts and the generous bounty that was offered, their enemies are now primarily cars and hunters. Coyotes, in competition for territory, are the fox's only animal predator in the Bay area.

Always an unexpected treat to see, the fox is now an established part of urban life, often living close to humans without them being aware. However, an astute observer will sometimes catch a glimpse in a busy neighborhood, and there's even an occasional sighting in cities. Left alone, foxes can become valuable controllers of rodents. Without foxes, we could easily become overrun by nature's furry little pests such as rats, mice and squirrels. This underappreciated resident of the Bay area is a valuable addition to the ecological balance and their species should be protected if they become further endangered.



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