



# NEWS YOU CAN USE

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## Tips to Sell Your Home in a Down Market

Selling a home in a down market takes more planning and preparation but with a little know-how it's still possible to get a great response with these quick tips:

**Price Matters:** Without a doubt, the most important consideration is to price the house right...especially if you want a quick sale. When the market was red-hot homes sold fast so it is easy to forget that historically homes are on the market an average of six months before selling. Be realistic and work with your agent to price right.

**Staging & Updating:** Make sure your home looks its best by updating paint, making small repairs and taking the time to properly stage your home for online and in-person viewing.

**Pre-Qualify:** Window-shopping is a popular past-time even when it comes to real estate. One of the benefits of working with an agent is the ability to preserve your valuable time and only entertain serious offers from qualified potential buyers.

**Reach Out:** Reaching the best potential buyers isn't always easy especially in a down market. It takes experience, objectivity and great marketing skills to know how to position your home to reach the right buyer. Does your home have a great view? It might be perfect as a vacation get-away. Is it located near a major International airport or business center? International buyers could be searching for a second home due to the favorable exchange rate.

**Offer Incentives:** Get noticed by offering buyer incentives. Buyer incentives are a welcome addition to any deal and include things like gift cards, LCD televisions or new appliances. Find out what tops the local "wish list" when it comes to amenities then calculate the cost of offering an incentive. They are an easy and effective way to capture the attention of potential buyers in a crowded market.



Today's housing market is a tough one but great deals can be found.

In fact, if you are in a position to purchase a home now may be the best time to do so. Many homes are selling well below their asking price and mortgage rates are low.

If you would like to see what being offered just give me a call at 210-383-7222 and I'll send some listings to you.

Merry Christmas and thanks as always for your referrals!

## 3 Useful Tips to Help You Find the Perfect Gift

Here are some tips and suggestions to spark the imagination.



### The Best Gift

The best gift affirms the recipient. It doesn't have to be expensive or unusual. When Chris was a kid he used to take things his parents already owned and wrap them as gifts. They certainly appreciated the thought and were even sometimes surprised they had such things.

People's conversations, emails and behavior are full of clues to what affirms them and makes an inspired gift. Almost anything conceivable can be purchased online.

### The Unusual

The internet is a great place to get suggestions for unusual presents. For example, try Googling a friend's hobby plus the word gift, e.g., golf gift. Dig into the results until you find something different, like a golf drink caddy that dispenses cold and hot drinks and looks like a driver (\$50 - \$100). Also consider:

- Something handmade, by you, a craftsperson or an artist
- A service rather than a thing, e.g., massage, pet sitting/grooming, catering
- Something from a vacation to an exotic locale

### Gag Gifts

Starting a gag gift tradition is a good way to make the holidays fun. For example:

- A caricature or personalized cartoon (\$20 - \$200)
- A Pimp My Cubicle Kit that adds mojo to a bland workspace (\$15)

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## HOW TO HOST A FUN FAMILY GATHERING FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Family and friends bless our homes during the holidays, bringing laughter and shared memories. Hosting a houseful of visiting relatives is a worthy challenge. I stress the worthy

Use this checklist to create happy holidays for all comers.

### Calm Kids

When children visit, their happiness is a key to the pleasure of all.

Remove breakables and sharp-cornered furniture from play areas - for toddlers, childproof the house; Establish clear safety rules and boundaries - let children know what is expected of them; Ensure a good night's sleep - afternoon rest periods help children (and adults) stay in top form; Provide amusing games, crafts and movies.

### Appreciative Adults

Adult guests appreciate a relaxed

atmosphere that meets their basic needs, and they usually require fewer safety precautions.

Check guests' food allergies, special needs and important daily routines; Select menu side-dishes and desserts requiring little last-minute preparation, so you can relax and have fun during the holiday; Graciously accept offers of food or help, or suggest alternatives that tap guests' talents and fit your plans; Arrange fun activities, sports or games, according to people's interests. When family members replay long-established interactions, enjoy the fun bits and smooth over the bumps - keep a light heart, stay focused on solutions, and divert attention as necessary.

## RECIPE OF THE MONTH

### Christmas Café Au Lait

- 1 1/2 cups whole milk
- 2/3 cup plus 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1/2 cup unsweetened Dutch-process cocoa powder
- 2 ( 2-inch) cinnamon sticks
- 1 strip orange peel, about 1/2 inch by 3 inches
- 10 whole cloves
- 2 to 2 1/2 cups hot brewed strong coffee
- 1/4 cup cold heavy cream
- Ground cinnamon, for garnish
- Cocoa, for garnish

### DIRECTIONS

In a medium saucepan, whisk together the milk, 2/3 cup of the sugar, and cocoa until smooth. Add the cinnamon sticks, orange peel and cloves and bring to a simmer, stirring, to dissolve the sugar and prevent the cocoa from sticking to the bottom of the pot. Simmer for 2 minutes, then remove from the heat, cover, and let steep for 10 minutes.

In a medium bowl, whip the cream with the remaining 1 teaspoon sugar until thick and frothy, and peaks form. Set aside.

Strain the milk mixture into a coffee pot or carafe and add 2 cups of the hot coffee (2 1/2 cups for stronger coffee flavor, to taste). Pour into cups or small mugs and top each with a dollop of the sweetened whipped cream.

Recipe Courtesy of: Emeril Lagasse

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Please call 210-383-7222 if you would like to be removed from our mailing list.

## THANKS FOR ALL YOUR REFERRALS!

I succeed when people like you refer me to their friends, neighbors and loved ones. It's the best kind of feedback I can receive. So thanks for continuing to pass this newsletter around to people you care about.

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