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Your best advocate when buying or selling a home

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I hope the New Year brings you plenty of opportunity for growth both personally and professionally. If a new home is on this year's list of resolutions, I will be happy to help you find one!



Some people don't realize the many benefits of a Home Protection Plan. However, as an experienced Real Estate Professional, I would like to point out how a quality Home Protection Plan can benefit you, whether you are buying or selling a home. A good Plan ensures the repair or replacement of covered home systems and appliances that fail due to normal use. For Sellers, this provides added value to your home when it is on the market. For Buyers, this means peace of mind and confidence in the purchase of your new home. I recommend to all my clients that a Home Protection Plan be included in their home transaction, and the company I trust to provide the best service and coverage is Old Republic Home Protection. Call me today for more information about how this valuable service can be put to work for you.

Referrals: they are the highest compliment a sales professional can receive from a client. Please pass my name on to friends, family, and acquaintances so that I can provide them with excellent real estate service.



## Health & Safety

### Strategies for Raising your Happiness Level

Would you like to increase your feeling of satisfaction and contentment? These ideas come from happiness researchers Sonja Lyubomirsky and Suzanne Segerstrom.



- Do something that is activity oriented to raise your endorphins. These things work: socialize, meditate, or exercise.
- Using detail, write down the things you are thankful for once a week.
- Get into a hobby or work task that will use and build on your skills. Losing yourself in a task typically brings on an extreme sense of fulfillment.
- Take the focus off yourself by doing something nice for someone else. Give freely of yourself and do not expect recognition for your kindness.
- Think about the kind of person you would like to be or the life you would like to live in five or ten years. Focus on your personality and value system, not a lifestyle. Write down your thoughts.
- Keep trying to achieve these goals even when you get discouraged.
- If you are a pessimist, try to control your anxiety by developing concrete, active methods to keep negative outcomes at bay for specific endeavors. Ignoring worries is not effective.

## Household Tips

### Economical Scented Window Cleaner

For about 25 cents you can make up a bottle of window cleaner that looks and smells like the commercial variety. It is just as effective and environmentally friendly. Plus, it also works great for keeping shower doors clean.

#### Ingredients –

- 12 to 17 ounces of water
- 1/4 c. rubbing alcohol
- 1/2 c. white or apple cider vinegar
- 1-2 drops essential oil such as lavender, clove, orange, or cinnamon
- 1-2 drops green or blue food coloring

Combine everything in a labeled spray bottle. When washing windows, use newspapers instead of paper towels for a lint-free surface (wear gloves to keep hands free of newspaper ink). Spray a crumpled newspaper and wipe down the window to avoid drips. Wipe horizontally on one side of the window and vertically on the other side so you will know where to remove any streaks that show.



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## Savor the Flavor

### Artichoke, Mushroom & Spinach Casserole

- 2 T. unsalted butter
- 3/4 c. chopped yellow onions
- 2 t. minced garlic
- 1/2 t. pepper
- 1/2 t. salt
- 2 14-oz. cans artichoke hearts, drained and quartered
- 1 lb. button mushrooms, cleaned and sliced
- 2 10-oz packages frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
- 1 c. grated Monterey Jack cheese
- 1 15-oz. container ricotta cheese
- 1/2 c. crumbled feta cheese
- 6 eggs
- Pinch of nutmeg
- 1/4 c. dried breadcrumbs
- 1/2 c. Parmesan cheese

Preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly butter a 9x13 inch glass baking dish. Melt butter in large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onions, 1/4 t. each of salt and pepper. Cook, stirring until soft, about three minutes. Stir in the garlic and cook for about 30 seconds. Add the mushrooms and cook for about five minutes, or until they give up their liquid. Remove from heat. In a large bowl, combine the artichoke hearts, spinach, and mushroom mixture along with the ricotta, Jack, and feta cheeses. Toss to combine. In a separate bowl, beat the eggs, nutmeg, remaining 1/4 t. salt and 1/4 t. pepper. Add to the spinach mixture. Mix in the breadcrumbs well. Transfer to the prepared dish and top with a layer of Parmesan. Bake until the casserole is firm and the top is golden, about 45 to 50 minutes. Remove from oven and serve. Makes 10-12 servings.

## Helpful Hints

### Cleaning & Storing Garden Tools

**W**hen you're not using garden tools for a few weeks or during winter, cleaning and storing them properly can add years to the life of your equipment. Then, when the gardening season returns, your tools will be in good shape and ready for use.

- Scrape off excess mud or dirt.
- Using an old wet rag, wipe off the tool and let it dry thoroughly.
- To remove any rust, rub the metal surface with steel wool. Be sure to wear gloves.
- To prevent rust, spray metal parts with a penetrating lubricating oil.
- Sharpen tools – such as spades or hoes – with a file made for sharpening tools. Hold the tool steady against a solid object and pull the file across the edge at a 45° angle until sharpened.
- Sand rough or splintery wood handles. Rub paste wax over handle.
- Store tools in a dry place. Avoid leaving them on the garage floor or other damp places.



## Brain Teasers

### New Year's in New York



1. Before the annual festivities took place at what is now known as Times Square, where did New Yorkers ring in the New Year?
  - A. On top of the Empire State Building
  - B. St. Patrick's Cathedral
  - C. Staten Island (at the Statue of Liberty)
  - D. Trinity Church
2. How long does it take the ball to drop to the bottom of the flagpole?
  - A. 60 seconds
  - B. 30 seconds
  - C. 10 seconds
  - D. 2 minutes
3. What was the original New Year's Ball made from?
  - A. Aluminum and wood
  - B. Wood and iron
  - C. Steel only
  - D. Plastic and wood
4. What was the original name of the area known as Times Square?
  - A. Triangular Crossroads
  - B. It didn't have a name
  - C. Longacre Square
  - D. Always called Times Square
5. Which company built the latest version of the New Year's Ball?
  - A. Macy's Art Department
  - B. Tiffany's
  - C. Neiman Marcus
  - D. Waterford Crystal

ANSWERS: 1-D; 2-A; 3-B; 4-C; 5-D