



# News You Can Use

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## How Craftsmanship Is Making a Comeback

The rise of careful craftsmanship is one of the more interesting trends that has gained traction over the last few years.

You can see it in the repurposing of vintage furniture and found objects, which become unique home décor objects in the hands of a skilled craftsman. You can see it in the 100-mile movement, with its emphasis on local, home-grown food and its extension into handmade crafts produced by local artisans. And you can see it in craft circles, artists' collectives and local artisans' markets, which are thriving across North America. Even interior designers are seeking out craftspeople for special projects, and the website [www.custommade.com](http://www.custommade.com), which connects clients to craftspeople, boasts some 36,000 completed projects.

The trend does in fact reflect a desire for unique items, but another possible stimulus is the decline in the quality of today's manufactured goods, which has sparked consumer interest in well-made and long-lasting products.

Today's consumers want to know what they're purchasing, where it came from and how it's being made. "They demand to be informed of every step of the process, for it is the only way to be sure that you are purchasing a quality product," comments CustomMade's Heather Bailey on <http://bostinno.com>. Their products may have a modern twist, but today's artisans channel their colleagues from the crafts movement of the early 20th century. While modern technology offers them easy access to information and networking, their passion for creating and pride of workmanship reflect the values of bygone days, with unique and amazing results.

## Want to Sell Your Home Fast? Get My Free Guide



Preparing your home for sale can make the difference between getting the price you want – or ending up disappointed.

Discover some easy things you can do by requesting my free guide, "50 Tips to Prepare Your Home for a Speedy, Top-Price Sale."

Just call me at 732-996-6060 and I'll send it right out to you.

## Make Moving Less Stressful for Your Kids

When it comes to major life events, moving is among the most stressful. But did you know that changing where you live can be just as traumatic and worrying for children as it is for adults?

If you're a parent, it's wise to consider the impact a move will have on your youngsters well in advance of moving day. Try to minimize any negative effects by talking through the realities of the changes your child is likely to experience.

Even very young children can become fearful or insecure if they see familiar pictures disappearing from walls and rooms filling with boxes as cherished items are packed in preparation for the move.

Older ones can become withdrawn as they ponder the unknown with questions like "Will I make friends?" and "Will I like my new school?"

So while moving can be hectic, it's important to make time to listen to your children's concerns, to be sensitive to any changes in their behavior and to provide plenty of reassurance. Let them know that while there may be challenges ahead, you'll be there to support them. If you need help, any bookstore has many excellent children's books that are appropriate for a range of ages and help explain the moving experience.

Once in your new home, set up the kids' rooms first. Quickly explore your new neighborhood with your children to help familiarize them with their surroundings.

You never know - you all might meet a few new friends along the way.

# Party Stress-Free With Tips From the Experts

It's one of life's great ironies that planning a fun party can be stressful. But it doesn't necessarily have to be.

Learn from the experts. Keep these party planners' tips top of mind and you'll have rave reviews from the partygoers while staying calm, cool and collected yourself.

## One month to go

**Choose a theme.** A theme makes planning your party a little easier and a lot more fun.

**Generate a budget.** This will be your lifeline for the party. Remember, it's not about how much you spend but what you do with your budget.

**Pick your guests.** Try not to invite people who hate each other; make sure it's a fun mix.

**Invite.** Use whatever works for you: e-vite, phone call or cute card.

## One week to go

**Plan your meal.** Hopefully everyone will have RSVP'd by now.

**Logistics.** Decide on a seating plan. Know where the coats will go. Make sure you have enough glasses of all types.

## Hours to go

**Go Zen.** Have everything ready well ahead so you can relax.

**Laugh at your mistakes.** Your guests are probably having too much fun to notice.

**Have fun yourself.** It's the best part of throwing a party!

## Worth Reading

### The Bucket List America's most idiotic new pastime

By *Simon Doonan*  
*Slate*

Do you have one, or are you a skeptic like Doonan? It seems to be common practice nowadays to have that ultimate list of things we want to have accomplished by the time we're gone (i.e.: have kicked the bucket). But why are bucket lists so popular all of a sudden? They're popping up everywhere, from talk around the water cooler to online dating.

**More:** <http://tinyurl.com/7la8rfu>

### The CIA Wants to Spy on You Through Your TV

By *Rob Waugh*  
*Daily Mail Online*

Nowadays there are a lot of gadgets that keep us connected – but we could be making a few unwanted connections without knowing it. By downloading movies or listening to web radio, you could be inviting strangers into your home. Now spies don't need to plant bugs for surveillance purposes; you're doing it for them.

**More:** <http://tinyurl.com/8415g38>

### Humor Is a Test of Character: Why Our Classrooms Need More Joy and Laughter

By *Steven Mazie*  
*bigthink.com*

Laughter in the classroom improves learning, Mazie says. We should be encouraging our educators not to take education – and themselves – so seriously. It could be as simple as a joke of the day or as complex as a reimaging of Shakespeare's Hamlet with a whole lot of silliness from student actors and their classmates.

**More:** <http://tinyurl.com/7jvylms>

## Quick Quiz

Each month I'll give you a new question.

Just email me at [newsletter@myNJhouse.com](mailto:newsletter@myNJhouse.com) or call 732-229-8700 for the answer.

What's the top-selling spice in the world?

## Wondering How Much Your Home Is Worth?

How has the price of your home changed in today's market? How much are other homes in your neighborhood selling for?

If you're wondering what's happening to prices in your area, or you're thinking about selling your house, I'll be able to help.

Just give my office a call for a no-fuss, professional evaluation.

I won't try to push you into listing with me or waste your time.

I'll just give you the honest facts about your home and its value.

And maybe I'll also give you the "inside scoop" on what's happening in the housing market near where you live!

Just give me a call at 732-996-6060 to arrange an appointment.

Alternatively, stop by at the office. The address is on the back page of this newsletter.

## Why Not Pass Me to a Friend?

If you've enjoyed this newsletter and found its information useful, please pass it to a neighbor, friend or co-worker.

And if you have any comments about it, don't forget to give me a call or send me an email!

# Make Your All-Season Room Work for You

All-season rooms – whether they're heated, fully insulated sunrooms or enclosed patios with an independent heating source – provide the perfect bridge between indoor and outdoor living spaces. But many homeowners aren't quite sure what to do with this sunny space.

If you've got an all-season room, take advantage of its potential. Determine your best use for the room and then think outside the glass box – perhaps you need a home office or a transition area from outside to inside to leave muddy clogs and jackets.

All-season rooms make great party spaces, family hangouts ... even mud rooms.

**Greenhouse.** A glass-enclosed sunroom provides lots of natural light for plants all year long. Use tile flooring for easy cleanup. A sink or easy access to a hose will make watering a breeze, and don't forget a small storage unit to hold fertilizer, pots and other plant paraphernalia. Add a comfy wicker chair and table so you can sit and enjoy the greenery.

**Home office.** With the addition of bookshelves and a desk, an insulated sunroom can be perfect for working at home. While the idea of a home office filled with light appeals, blinds or curtains are essential for making it work for work. Choose light furniture and sunny paint colors.

**Mud room.** An enclosed patio is perfect for storing shoes, jackets and seasonal items. Pick easy-to-clean, scratch-resistant flooring. Add mats for muddy boots, stand-up coat storage or pegs and a bench for removing your shoes.

**Party room.** A sunroom can be party central. Wicker furniture and light-colored cushions keep the look airy and light, and bright flowers in small glass vases add punches of color. Use a bar cart to store tableware and glassware. Portable speakers or an iPod dock add music without taking up too much space, and they can be tucked away when not in use.

## Do You Know What's on Your Food?

Pesticides and fertilizers are of growing concern, and more and more people are aware of their potential dangers. But now there are ways of learning just exactly what's in the produce you eat.

A new website and accompanying app ([www.whatsonmyfood.org](http://www.whatsonmyfood.org)) will help consumers make informed choices by explaining just what and how many chemicals and pesticides your food contains. Now you can opt for pesticide-free products instead of a nonorganic alternative.

Meanwhile the nonprofit organization Environmental Working Group, which specializes in research into toxic chemicals, has listed a "dirty dozen" of produce with the highest pesticide load. These include apples, strawberries, peaches, spinach, nectarines, grapes, sweet bell peppers, celery, potatoes and lettuce. Some, of course, may be peeled to dramatically reduce pesticide residue, but what do you do about others?

It's worth considering. According to experts, even small doses of chemicals can lead to poor health, especially for the most vulnerable – the elderly and the young.

## Flying? Turn Off Your Smartphone

When something goes wrong with an aircraft, officials investigate and passengers demand answers. But who would expect the passengers themselves to be holding both cause and solution in their hands? Their smartphones.

There is a reason passengers are asked to turn off electronic devices while flying. But many don't. Almost a quarter of respondents in an online survey admitted to using electronics after the

announcement. So it's no surprise there were 32 reported cases of electronics causing airline interference in a 10-year period.

It doesn't always happen: There are several factors that come into play, including the type of device and the user's seat location. But do you want to take the chance? By turning off your electronic device you could save lives. Including your own.

## Ask the Agent: This Month's Question

**What do I need to know about buying a rental property?**

Falling home prices in many areas and low interest rates may make this a great time to buy an investment property. But becoming a landlord requires serious thought:

- Before deciding, check out landlord-tenant dynamics by talking to practicing landlords.
- If you want to rent out a residential property, buy near other rentals.
- Choose properties close to amenities such as grocery stores or public transit. This will appeal to renters and make your property more saleable.
- Build a great team. Most important, you need a real estate agent experienced in selling rentals.
- Be prepared to pay the mortgage when your property is vacant.
- Become a handyman or develop a list of trusted tradespeople.

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**Sudoku instructions:** Complete the 9x9 grid so that each row, each column, and each of the nine 3x3 boxes contains the digits 1 through 9. Contact me for the solution!

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## Recipe: Essential Pasta Pomodoro

Serves 4

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ cup chopped onion
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 28-ounce can whole tomatoes, pureed
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 pound spaghetti
- 2 tablespoons butter
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan
- Basil, for garnish

Heat oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add onion and sauté for about 10 minutes; then add minced garlic and continue stirring for 2 minutes. Add pureed tomatoes and season with salt and pepper.

Lower heat and simmer for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Meanwhile, cook pasta in salted boiling water until just before tender. Drain and reserve ½ cup cooking water.

Add reserved pasta water to sauce and bring to a boil. Stir in the pasta and finish cooking, about two minutes.

Remove pan from heat and stir in butter and Parmesan. Serve with more grated cheese and basil.

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