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INSIDE

What Changed in 2017?
PAGE 1

These Products Make Housework Easier!
PAGE 2

Give Up the Search for Happiness
PAGE 2

Stop Wasting Gift Wrap!
PAGE 3

Meringuitos (Meringues)
PAGE 3

A Personalized Way to Welcome
PAGE 4

**Contact me for all of your auto
accident and personal injury needs!**

GIVE A DIY HOUSEWARMING GIFT BASKET!

Around the world, people welcome their newest neighbors with special gifts. Russia is often credited with starting this housewarming tradition. Dignitaries would visit nearby villages to deliver salt and bread to townspeople. The salt was symbolic of living a life full of flavor, while the bread was so no one would go hungry.

Other cultures have their own housewarming customs. In Italy, a broom is bequeathed to new inhabitants to sweep away any lingering evil spirits. Another common gift is a candle, which signifies always having light. Meanwhile, the French make a day of it by inviting new neighbors over for a "l'aperitif," an afternoon snack of cheese and meat. Indians also extend a hospitable welcome, inviting new neighbors to join them for lunch or dinner. These neighbors also receive a gift for their new home.

People often lament a time when "everyone knew their neighbors," and while some nostalgia is better left to memory (lava lamps, for example), a neighborly connection is worth pursuing. If you've never met yours, or if you just noticed the new family moving in next door, it's time to extend a friendly hand. This holiday season, go above and beyond by putting together a gift basket for your neighbors inspired by some of the aforementioned traditions. Here are a few themes to try.



CLEANLINESS IS NEXT TO GODLINESS

There's nothing worse than unpacking and realizing you tossed out all of your cleaning tools. Draw on Italian sensibility and put together a household supply basket. Fill this basket with items like all-purpose cleaner, furniture spray, antibacterial wipes, sponges, and automatic air fresheners.

FLAVORS OF LIFE

Everyone needs the basics when they are settling into a new home. Put together a basket with these ingredients for a savory start: gourmet salt, a bread mix, olive oil and vinegar, a mixed herb set, and a bottle of wine to make unpacking a bit more enjoyable.

WARMTH FOR WINTER'S CHILL

You can also provide heartwarming gifts to brighten a new home. This theme might include seasonal candles, scented plug-ins, a decorative string of lights, and glow-in-the-dark stars for the kids' room.

Once you've chosen a theme, gather the materials to prepare your basket, including a decorative bow and matching tissue paper. Then, stop by and introduce yourself and share your thoughtful, creative gift. You're sure to impress!

Guidance **◆** Support **◆** Action
Orientación **◆** Apoyo **◆** Acción

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POSITIVE CHANGES IN 2017

Looking back at 2017, I have a lot to be grateful for. Most importantly, all of my family in Puerto Rico survived the terrible hurricanes there. Unfortunately, they still didn't have electricity after Irma, so a few weeks after the storm hit, my grandma and aunt came up to Florida. Many places on the island are still completely without power, but I'm grateful that my family is safe in the States.

I'm also grateful for how my office has grown. Andy, my Firm Manager, has only been with us full-time for a year, but the two of us go way back. Before starting my own law practice, I worked for another law firm for several years. I managed one of the satellite offices for that firm and was looking to hire someone for an open position. Andy applied for the job, and although he didn't have legal experience, I knew he was going to be a rock star. I told the partners that they *needed* to hire him, and after they met him they agreed. In fact, they offered him the job at the end of the interview!

"Andy has a real talent for helping clients during a crisis, something that many of you know already."



Once he started at that firm, Andy and I got to work together a lot. I brought him up to speed with the legal aspects of the job and trained him, especially on personal injury work, which was one of the firm's areas of practice. With his great attitude and his sales background, Andy soon proved me right about his potential for success. When I left the firm to open my own practice, I was sad to leave him behind.

Fast-forward to last year. I'd had my own personal injury practice for a while, and things were picking up to a point that I knew I really needed someone to help out at least part-time. I knew just who I wanted for the job, and in August 2016, Andy started working for me as a remote contractor. We already had a strong previous working relationship, so it wasn't hard to jump into the thick of things like old times.

In January of this year, Andy became my full-time Firm Manager. That means he does a lot! He makes phone calls, helps me

manage cases, keeps track of scheduling, and handles clerical stuff that I was previously spending too much time on. I went into solo practice so that I could give great client service and have more time with my husband and son. Working on clerical stuff did not allow me to do either of those things.

Andy has a real talent for helping clients during a crisis, something that many of you know already. He's extremely competent, and we can work hand-in-hand to get great results for the people we serve. Andy's also a great sounding board for ideas, and despite being a white guy from Wisconsin, his Spanish is deceptively good.

I'm grateful for the changes 2017 has brought to my office. Without a doubt, Andy is one of the most positive changes.

-Melina Pérez Halpern

3 CLEANING “RIP-OFFS” THAT ACTUALLY WORK

If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is. But sometimes we stumble across a few hidden gems that make our lives easier. And, when it comes to cleaning house, we can all use a little “easier.” Check out these products you may have already written off and let them surprise you.

DOLLAR STORE CLEANING PRODUCTS

If you’ve ever ducked into the local dollar store to buy some Mylar balloons for your niece’s birthday party, you might have noticed the jugs and spray bottles plastered with the word “Awesome.” Surely, this knock-off soap can’t work as well as your brand-name products, right? You’d be surprised. Online reviewers sing Awesome’s praises, suggesting it should really be a higher price



for how well it works. Just make sure you wear gloves when you use it.

DETERGENT PODS

You use too much soap in your washing machine and dishwasher. At least, that’s what the New York Times reported as the No. 1 complaint from repair people and appliance experts. Modern appliances are designed to use less water, and as soap becomes more concentrated, using too much can damage your machine. That’s what makes detergent pods so handy. They don’t look like they can clean all your dishes or an entire load of clothes,

but they actually provide the perfect amount for modern machines. You save money on detergent and machine repair!

FOAM CLEANING BLOCKS

Anything with “magic” in the title sounds like a scam. For this reason, you may have avoided the Mr. Clean Magic Eraser and similar melamine foam products. But this is one case where the product lives up to its wild claims. Melamine foam is abrasive and can break down and remove material from fine cracks and textures, making it an effective cleaner. It can be used to whiten sneakers, clean tub scum, and remove permanent marker from your fridge.

Since the snake oil salesmen in the days of old first tricked trusting folks out of their hard-earned cash, consumers have wised up and are quick to write off perceived scams. Still, every now then you get lucky, and the cheap white sponge really does make the stove look like new. But you should still think twice before you say yes to gas station sushi.

GIVE UP THE SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS AND LOOK FOR MEANING INSTEAD

How many books have you seen with the word “happiness” in the title? A lot, right? It’s such a popular topic because the pursuit, journey, and, ultimately, achievement of happiness is supposed to be the key to a fulfilling life. Happiness is the ultimate human condition; reaching it is our purpose and will bring us contentment.

But before you pick up that guide to happiness, there’s some new data you need to pay attention to. Turns out, we’ve been focusing on the wrong goal. More and more research is supporting the benefit of pursuing a meaningful life over a happy one.

Viktor Frankl could be called a leading expert on the topic. Frankl lived through the Holocaust in a concentration camp and saw firsthand how humans deal with unhappy circumstances. As a respected psychiatrist, his observations became the basis for his

book, “Man’s Search for Meaning.” Frankl found that the people who stood the best chance of surviving the horrific experience were those who saw some sort of meaning in their lives, even under the bleakest circumstances. For Frankl, this meant providing therapy to others in the camp. As Frankl puts it, once a person finds meaning, they know the “why” of their existence, and they will be able to bear almost any “how.”

In the years since “Man’s Search for Meaning” was written, it seems we’ve forgotten a lot of its advice. The Centers for Disease Control found that four out of every 10 Americans do not have a satisfying life purpose, and yet, 60 percent of Americans say they are happy. What gives?

It comes down to the pursuit of happiness versus pursuing meaning in life. It’s the difference between “I’m going to buy this

dress because it will make me happy” and “I’m going to volunteer at a shelter because it will be meaningful.” Happiness involves satisfying an immediate need, whereas finding meaning focuses on making choices that give us a sense of purpose. Even more telling, the Journal of Positive Psychology found that meaningful acts usually involve giving, but reaching happiness often means taking. Because of this, leading a meaningful life, while often more challenging, is also more satisfying.

Is it possible that the pursuit of a meaningful life will lead us to happiness? Absolutely. Just don’t expect it to be an everlasting condition. Think of happiness the way psychologist Frank T. McAndrew does: “Recognizing that happiness exists — and that it’s a delightful visitor that never overstays its welcome — may help us appreciate it more when it arrives.”

3 Creative Gift Wrap Alternatives

There’s something magical about seeing a stack of presents wrapped in bright, multicolored paper. However, that enchanting scene quickly evaporates a few hours later when all those wads of wrapping paper and plastic bows are chucked unceremoniously into the garbage. What if we told you there are countless ways you can still enjoy wrapping and unwrapping presents, without all the waste? Here are a few creative gift wrap alternatives to consider this holiday season.

BROWN PAPER BAGS

With the holiday season comes holiday shopping, and if you opt out of plastic grocery bags, you’re sure to have a surplus of brown paper bags in the pantry. Drop a present into the bag, tape it shut, and you’re good to go. Add some simple lace or a ribbon for an old-timey feel or get creative

with stamps and hand-drawn artwork. This wrap job lets your imagination run wild.

OLD MAPS AND CALENDARS

These days, pretty much every phone has a built-in GPS, so you probably won’t need the map from your 1999 road trip anytime soon. If you still have an old map, why not use that for wrapping? The unusual designs guarantee your gifts will be one of a kind. And don’t worry if there are notes scrawled across the paper. Old events or directions will add some unique flair to the presents.

FUROSHIKI

Fabric is an excellent substitute for wrapping paper. You can use a scarf to create two gifts in one or pull out scraps of fabric from old projects. The traditional Japanese practice of furoshiki is all about wrapping goods in fabric. Described as



“functional fabric origami,” you’d be amazed at how a few well-placed folds can turn your gift into a work of art. Learn how to wrap anything, from boxes to bottles, at ceas.ku.edu/furoshiki-instructional-videos.

You don’t have to follow the same gift wrap habits year after year. After the effort you put into finding just the right present, you should be able to make your gift wrap just as special. Find a method that’s uniquely you and get started!

SUDOKU

4	6			8	9			
				1				8
		2				5	6	
7	4					3	9	
					4			
	8	9	2	6			1	
	5		7		8			3
			4				2	
				9	6			

4	6	7	5	8	9	2	3	1
3	9	5	6	1	2	4	7	8
8	1	2	3	4	7	5	6	9
7	4	6	8	5	1	3	9	2
1	2	3	9	7	4	6	8	5
5	8	9	2	6	3	7	1	4
6	5	1	7	2	8	9	4	3
9	7	8	4	3	5	1	2	6
2	3	4	1	9	6	8	5	7

ANSWER:

MERINGUITOS (MERINGUES)

WARM METHOD

Ingredients

- 4 large egg whites (room temperature)
- Pinch of salt

Directions

1. With an electric mixer, beat egg whites in a large bowl until they form soft peaks. Do not overbeat.
2. Add a pinch of salt and continue to beat. Add a small amount of sugar at a time until you’ve incorporated all of the sugar into the mixture. The mixture should be firm and form stiff peaks. Turn off beater and fold in 1 tablespoon of sugar with a spatula.

Start to finish: 2 hours and 20 minutes

Yield: 1 dozen

Meringues are like the topping of a lemon pie, only drier and puffier.

- 1 cup sugar
- Baking parchment or paper baking cups (sprayed lightly with cooking spray)

3. If you have a pastry bag, fill it with the mixture. Use the tip that came with the pastry bag and squeeze out 3-inch circles onto parchment (or fill individual paper baking cups). If you don’t have a pastry bag, use a spoon.
4. Bake meringues at 200 F for approximately 2 hours. The meringues should be dry and crispy — not brown.

Recipe from icuban.com