



**Don't kiss chickens**

New fowl advice from the Centers for Disease Control is evidently necessary. Don't kiss chickens, they say. Not even snuggly little chicks and ducklings. It seems that kissing fowl has foul consequences. According to the New York Times, the warning is due to a salmonella outbreak linked to backyard poultry, with 163 illnesses and 34 hospitalizations in 43 states. Keeping poultry at home in a backyard coop is fine, according to the CDC, but owners should wash hands for 20 seconds after contact with birds and related supplies and not allow small children to touch them. While stories abound about people who have a chicken as a pet, those who have owned chickens as a hobby may not be inclined to kiss them anyway. "They can be jerks," said one coop owner.

**Minor kitchen renovations pay at sale**

We know that kitchens and bathrooms are traditionally the money rooms in a house -- keep these in style and spiffy, and you can make more money on a sale. Thing is, you need your kitchen and bathrooms to look good, but you don't want to put a lot of money into the remodel.

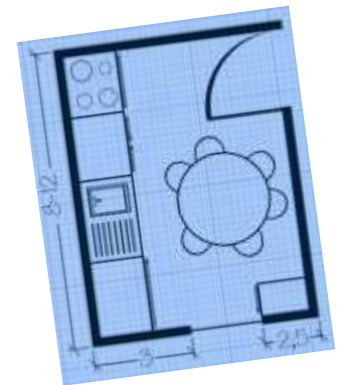
According to Remodeling Magazine, minor kitchen or bath renovations often recoup the investment at sale. But that's only if the basics are in good shape. The roof, siding and windows should also be in good order.

Minor kitchen and bath projects (about \$15,000) can recoup more than 99 percent of the investment. But home renovations have been an exercise in patience lately, with limited supplies and long waiting times, not to mention higher prices.

So how can you renovate your kitchen quickly and on a budget?

Here are some ideas to save money on that kitchen remodel:

- \* Use open shelving. Open shelving costs less than wall cabinets.
- \* If you want cabinet doors, consider slab door fronts or shaker style, which are typically less expensive.
- \* Ask your neighbors for their stuff. Seriously -- if you know of someone doing a remodel, find out what they're doing with their old items. Chances are they'd love to see their cabinets, sinks or light fixtures being repurposed rather than thrown away.
- \* Head to the discount appliance store. They'll have scratches or dents, but you can often fix those or find an appliance with an imperfection in an unnoticeable spot.
- \* Visit secondhand shops and auctions. Get there early on the days they bring in new items and move fast -- you won't be the only one there!
- \* Paint and new hardware. This one almost always works. A new coat of paint, some updated pulls and knobs and voila! A whole new look.
- \* Keep things where they are. If you do opt for a more extensive remodel, keep the plumbing and gas lines where they are. It can add a lot to the cost when you change the footprint and move these around.





## Ask the Expert

*Home prices have been rising fast. Should I apply for a preapproval that's more than I think I need?*

There's no question we're in a hot market right now that shows few signs of cooling off. However, the fundamental rule still applies when it comes to getting a mortgage: Stay within budget.

The more prep work you do ahead of time, the better. This serves the dual purpose of helping you move quickly when needed as well as acting with a cool head. Before you even start looking at homes, figure out your finances and calculate how much you can and want to spend on a mortgage. Remember to factor in insurance, taxes and a rainy day fund for repairs.

Then you'll apply for your preapproval. This is the bank's letter attesting to how much you can afford.

A quick note about preapproval versus prequalification letters: The prequalification is typically based upon self-reported information, while the preapproval involves the bank checking your credit score and verifying bank and income records. Although some institutions may use the terms interchangeably, the preapproval generally carries more weight -- and

## Ancient Pepper Can Spice Up Barbecue

Black pepper (*piper nigrum*), the friend to salt on your kitchen table, probably comes to you from Vietnam or Ethiopia, via thousands of years of discovery and spice trade.

But, there is another pepper, today a less known pepper, that competed for a place on tables hundreds of years ago, with a flavor described as a sort of sweet heat.

The Long Pepper (*piper longum*) was long famous in its native India, where it won a place in medicine and food. Later, it dominated Greek cooking when it appeared in the Mediterranean in the sixth century B.C., according to *Gastro Obscura*.



The long pepper fell into disuse when the Romans, by the fourth century A.D., were able to bring vast quantities of black pepper from Kerala, undercutting the price of

long pepper. By the 1700s, long pepper had largely disappeared.

Barbecue magic?

Long pepper is still available online and it has reappeared as a key ingredient in pork ribs by Brooklyn barbecue restaurant, Fatty 'Cue, which specializes in grilling, smoking and barbecuing.

Writer Sarah Laskow compared the flavors of the black and long peppers, saying that black pepper had a sharp and aggressive pop, while long pepper tended to linger and grow in power with a

mellow, floral note.

Long pepper is good with fresh melon or pineapple, salads, or even in cocktails.

On the Web, long pepper is available at [SaltTraders.com](http://SaltTraders.com).

in a hot market, this can give you an edge when making offers. Remember that neither is final, however. Your loan will go through a final round of verifications and include an appraisal and inspection before it becomes official.

Back to how much you should apply for. A common rule of thumb says to keep your mortgage payment -- including principal, interest, taxes and insurance -- at or below 28 percent of your gross monthly income, and your total debt service below 36 percent.

When you stick to this formula, you make things easy on yourself. Now you've got a definitive number in mind and you can shop for houses that fit your budget rather than the other way around.



"Are you the party who called tech support?"



## The national happy march satisfies the urge to conduct the band

If you are older, you may not have heard it for a while. If you are younger, you may never have heard it.

Either way, on July 4, find The Stars & Stripes Forever and listen. You'll want to conduct the band with abandon and smash the air cymbals. It's a giant, jubilant march, with stirring lyrics which, for fun, you can also substitute for a duck song (Be kind to your web-footed friends...).

John Philip Sousa -- Marine, musician and band leader -- was returning to the United States from a vacation in Italy in 1896.



It was Christmas Day and from the deck of an ocean liner, he heard the march in his head.

"Suddenly, I began to sense the rhythmic beat of a band playing within my brain," Sousa wrote in his autobiography *Marching Along*. "I did not transfer a note of that music to paper while I was on the steamer, but when we reached shore I set down the measures that my brain-band had been playing for me, and not a note of it has ever changed."

The song repeats melodies in sections, called strains, using different instruments to repeat and lead. So the song begins with a hearty introduction by the horns with great smashing on drums, followed by the melody. Woodwinds repeat, and later, the famous response of the piccolos. The trombones thunder in with a bold counter melody.

While it is the official national march of the United States, the tune has also been adopted by soccer fans in the UK, sung as 'Here We Go,' once called a working class march.

One strange Stars & Stripes Forever fact: Circuses in the early 20th century loved to fire up the crowd with march music, but they never played The Stars & Stripes Forever. This tune was a secret signal, only played when a life-threatening disaster was imminent. When they heard it, emergency personnel would quietly disperse the crowd, not always successfully.

## Ideas for adding a pantry

If you're considering putting in a pantry, you've got plenty of options. You can DIY extra shelving, hire a contractor to build a walk-in space or settle on something in between.

*Here are some ideas:*

- \* Convert a closet into a pantry space. A nearby broom closet or coat closet can be perfect, or the space under a set of stairs.
- \* Use a freestanding wardrobe or armoire. You can install shelves in place of the hanging space and stand your new freestanding pantry along a wall.
- \* Use the garage. Grandma did it!
- \* Repurpose a bookshelf. You can do as little or as much as you want with this piece.
- \* Put a skinny rollout cabinet between the fridge and nearby wall. Bonus: you won't have to attempt to clean crumbs out of that space anymore.



## The magical story of Romeo still tugs at Alaska's heart

A magical thing happened in Juneau, Alaska, 18 years ago, and as with most magical things, some people loved it and some hated it. But it's a true story of a solitary wolf who wanted to be friends.

His name was Romeo, a black wolf who is now a legend. He was a rare creature: Wild but friendly, alone and in search of friends, a player of games, a curious visitor and, ultimately, a target.

This story began in 2003, when Nick and Sherrie Jans were walking their dogs across a frozen Alaskan lake. Suddenly, a black wolf appeared. Jans wasn't surprised. He had seen wolf tracks in the snow. But now their labrador broke free and ran to the wolf. While the couple held their breath, the dog slid across the ice toward the wolf ... and then? Wolf and dog sniffed and bowed in that iconic canine way. It was the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

During the next six years, Romeo visited his dog friends, appearing frequently, sometimes disappearing for weeks at a time. The humans didn't feed him, but Romeo played with their dogs, dancing and chasing -- and scaring up a controversy.

Not everyone welcomed a wolf in the neighborhood. Someone tried to trap him, another tried to poison him. His human friends rallied to protect him.

Speculation arose that he was a wolf without a pack because his mate had been killed. Maybe his mate had been the pregnant wolf killed by a car around the same time Romeo appeared.

Whatever Romeo's story -- no one really knows -- in September 2009, he disappeared and never returned. Romeo's friend Harry Robinson discovered that Romeo had been shot at point-blank range -- easy to get close to a friendly animal. Robinson tracked down the killers.

Sorrow and anger roiled the community. Jans, a wildlife photographer and expert on the Alaskan wilderness, wrote a book, *A Wolf Called Romeo*, detailing the incredible story. (Web: [nickjans.com](http://nickjans.com))

Today, after a seven-year struggle, a memorial is finally displayed at the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center, where you can see Romeo, relaxed and noble and ready to play with your dog.

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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 	2	3
4 Independence Day	5	6	7	8 	9 Wild Horse Stampede, Wolf Point, Montana	10
11 Calgary Stampede	12	13 Yacht Race, Long Beach	14	15	16	17
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