

HOUSECALLS



Gabe's March 2019 Stuart Florida Real Estate HouseCalls



Your Name Here

Luck abounds if you do find a four-leaf clover

Like the discovery of a heads-up penny or the act of tossing spilled salt over your left shoulder, finding a four-leaf clover is considered good luck to those of us with a superstitious bent. But while your chances of stumbling upon the penny are 50-50 and you can toss that salt any old time, what are the odds of finding the four-leaf clover?

About 1 in 10,000.

Dr. John Frett, professor of Landscape Horticulture and Director of the University of Delaware Botanic Gardens, was quoted on mar-

thastewart.com as saying the 1 in 10,000 chance is for a typical group of plants that represents the statistical norm for the population. On the other hand, in 2014, a woman in Sydney, Australia, happened upon 21 of the lucky clovers in her front yard. So there's that.

One website devoted to clovers warns against buying imposters. The real deal, according to clovers.com, comes from the White Clover plant, or the trifolium repens. The site even includes diagrams to educate the public on genuine versus fake four-leaf clovers.

Market Report: Millennials become buyers as market normalizes

Eleven years after the real estate crash that triggered a recession, there's good news: the market appears to have normalized in recent years.

Sales prices have rebounded but are not extreme, and loans are more readily available than in those first few panic-stricken years. Meanwhile, the Millennial generation (ages 22 to 36), are aging into home buying range just as baby boomers age into retirement sales -- although that tradeoff has not been fully realized.

Historically low rates

Even a steady stream of interest rate increases since 2015 hasn't dampened the mood -- 30-year fixed rates are still in the historically low to average range, hovering between 4 and 5 percent.

Lower inventory of homes for sale and the higher cost of materials and labor means sales prices have risen and condi-



tions have favored sellers; additionally, many homeowners have opted to remain in place, finding it cheaper to renovate or add on rather than sell and find a replacement home.

In fact, in November 2018, the National Association of Realtors said that year-over-year contract signings -- an indicator of pending home sales -- had dropped for 10 straight months. At the same time, the federal Bureau of Economic Analysis reported a rise in rentals, which it expected to continue.

Plentiful opportunities

But that doesn't mean home buying has stalled, either. In fact, opportunities are still plentiful, as are the number of buyers, especially millennials seeking their first homes.

According to Trulia, 21 percent of Americans aged 18 to 34 said they plan to buy

within the next 12 months.

A real difference?

And in the end, a quarter of a percentage point here or there doesn't equate to a big difference in the monthly payment -- it can be as little as \$20 in many cases. According to some forecasters, home prices adjust to accommodate the change. In other words, prices could actually come down a little.

So if you are considering a purchase, 2019 is expected to provide plenty of



Ask the Expert

I am 35 and I've never owned a home. Now that I am paying attention to mortgage rates, I see an increase. Should I wait -- or worry?

Simply put: It's a fantastic time to buy (and with home prices rising it is a great time to sell, too).

You are at exactly the right age, on the high end of the millennial generation, to buy a home.

It's true that in the last couple of years, a string of incremental rate increases by The Federal Reserve has put the focus on the housing market, where mortgage rates reflect those rate increases. Some assume that, as The Fed raises short-term interest rates, mortgage rates also rise and buyers are scared off by higher monthly payments.

While payments do indeed rise, how serious is it? Sometimes it's not as much as you might think. If you are not paying cash for your house, you have to get a loan anyway. It's not unreasonable to ask how much a slight raise in rates actually affects your payments.

Dealing With Seasonal Allergies



The impending arrival of spring also means the arrival of sneezing, sniffing, and brain fog for millions of people afflicted with seasonal allergies. Many people take prescription or over-the-counter medicines to treat them, but you can alleviate symptoms through a number of methods.

The Mayo Clinic offers a variety of tips to help people deal with allergies. They include minimizing your exposure by staying inside on dry, windy days to delegating lawn mowing duties and making sure to NOT hang laundry outside.

Some other tips include:

Avoid outdoor activity in the early morning when pollen counts are highest.

Use the air conditioning in your house and car, and use a dehumidifier to keep the in-

door air dry.

Rinse your nasal passages with a saline solution, either via a squeeze bottle or a neti pot. Make up the saline solution using water that's distilled, sterile, previously boiled and cooled, or filtered with an absolute pore size of 1 micron or smaller. Also make sure to rinse the irrigation device after each use with similarly distilled, sterile, previously boiled and cooled, or filtered water and leave open to air-dry.

Some natural treatments that may help include extracts of the shrub butterbur and spirulina, though the Mayo Clinic says the benefits and safety aren't clear.

If symptoms are bad enough, visit your doctor. You may take tests to determine what, exactly, you are allergic to in order to avoid and/or treat those specific triggers.

Online mortgage calculators let you plug in your purchase price, down payment, length of loan, and interest rate. A 30-year fixed loan for \$200,000 at 4.5 percent results in a payment of \$1,013. Here we aren't factoring in a down payment, taxes, or insurance, which vary. (As you move along in your home purchase, you will have all that information.)

But compare that rate to the same loan for the same amount at 4.75 percent. The monthly payment is \$1,043 -- a difference of \$30 a month. When you find the right

home, a jump of \$30 probably won't be a deal killer.

Right now, The Fed has signaled that interest rates may not rise in the near term, since inflation is low. But remember, rates do rise and fall over time. In 1999, the mortgage rate was 6.98 percent. In the 1980s, rates were a catastrophic 18 percent. A rate of about 4.5 to 4.75 percent isn't the lowest historically but it certainly is affordable and nowhere near the highest.

Have no fear about buying. Inflation is low and even if it rises, your mortgage payment won't.

Spring starts earlier than you think

If you're in a rush to get to spring already, consider marking your calendar with the meteorological first day of spring.

Meteorological seasons are different from the astronomical ones, which rely on the actual movement of the sun. Instead, meteorological seasons are based on annual temperature cycles and the Gregorian calendar, according to Accuweather.

In short, the weathermen say spring begins March 1 and the astronomers set it at March 20 in 2019.

But who's counting?

Meteorological seasons bring all seasons sooner. Meteorological summer begins June 1 through August. Meteorological fall is September, October, and November. And the weathermen start winter on December 1.

Since astronomical seasons vary in days from 89 to 93, meteorologists calculate the season in chunks that make comparing statistics easier.

With meteorological seasons, meteorologists can compare statistics for the same three-month cycles. The only hiccup in that plan is one extra winter day every four years, during Leap Year.

Saving for a down-payment?

Try the no-spend challenge

A financial writer set out to spend no extra money for a year.

Michelle McGagh and her husband vowed to pay bills, but not to buy coffee, clothes, or a beer at a pub. They didn't eat out or even buy gas. Instead she rode her bike everywhere all the time. She spent only \$35 on food every week, so she had to plan cheap meals.

What happened? At the end of one year she saved \$23,000.

She admits the effort was not easy. She missed having face cream and fresh flowers. She missed socializing with friends at a pub. And they missed her.

On the other hand, she also found new ways to have fun for free and she realized how much money she frittered away. McGagh wrote about her extreme challenge in her book, "The No Spend Year: How you can spend less and live more."

McGagh's challenge was extreme--but what if you could spend nothing extra for just one month. Could you save money? Definitely.

According to Bankrate.com, the first thing to do is decide why. It could be to pay off a big bill that is coming or pad



your savings account, but the goal should mean something to you.

Next steps:

- Eliminate any optional expense that comes out of your checking account such as subscriptions. They will take your money next month.

- Eliminate luxuries and start thinking of some things as luxuries. For example, cable TV. You could get rid of Netflix for \$10 a month or cable for \$120, or both.

- Make a barebones food plan and stick to it. No prepared foods. Make your own cookies. This is nearly its own challenge. Can you spend \$100 a week or less on food?

- Cellphone: No extra overages or get rid of the plan, if you can.

- No restaurants or pubs. Plan some things to do that are free.

Then count your cash at the end of the month!

Red Pepper Falafel blends flavor and history

Falafel is an interesting blend of chickpeas, vegetables, and spices that are chopped up together, rolled into balls, and deep fried in vegetable oil.

When asked today, people from many countries such as a Palestine, Yemen, Lebanon, and Israel would probably tell you that they are responsible for inventing falafel. According to History Today, however, Egypt is the likely origin of the falafel that people are familiar with now and it might not be as old as you think. It was first mentioned in Egyptian literature as early as 1882 and seems to be linked to the British occupation of that time.

Ingredients

8 ounces dried chickpeas, soaked overnight, drained

1/2 onion, coarsely chopped

1/2 small red bell pepper, coarsely chopped

1 garlic clove, crushed

3 tablespoons chickpea flour

1 tablespoon ground cumin

2.5 teaspoons kosher salt

2 teaspoons ground coriander

1 teaspoon smoked paprika

1 teaspoon Hungarian sweet paprika

1 teaspoon baking powder

Vegetable oil (for frying; about 8 cups)

Directions

1. Take the soaked chickpeas and pulse them in a food processor, scraping as necessary. After about one minute, they should resemble finely chopped nuts. Scrape everything into a large bowl.

2. Pulse the onion, garlic, and bell pepper



in the food processor, until coarsely chopped, about one minute.

3. Add the chopped mixture to the chickpeas and then mix in chickpea flour, cumin, salt, coriander, smoked paprika, Hungarian sweet paprika, and baking powder. Mold mixture into ping-pong-sized balls.

4. Pour oil into a large pot - to at least three inches in depth. Heat the oil up to 330 degrees. Cook the falafel in small batches, turning occasionally, until deep brown and crispy. It will take about five minutes.

5. Transfer the finished falafel to a paper towel to drain.

These are great served alongside a bright cabbage slaw, tahini sauce, and pita bread.


March 2019



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5 Mardi Gras	6 Ash Wednesday	7	8	9
10 Daylight Saving Begins	11	12	13	14 Pi Day	15	16
17 St. Patrick Day	18	19	20 Spring!		22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29 Vietnam Veteran Day	30
31						

Florida 2018 (Yearly) Single Family Home Market Report

Click on the Image for the full report

Yearly Market Detail - 2018
Single Family Homes
Florida





Summary Statistics	2018	2017	Percent Change Year-over-Year
Closed Sales	277,827	271,825	2.2%
Paid in Cash	72,292	73,747	-2.0%
Median Sale Price	\$254,505	\$237,500	7.2%
Average Sale Price	\$338,569	\$316,697	6.9%
Dollar Volume	\$94.1 Billion	\$86.1 Billion	9.3%
Median Percent of Original List Price Received	96.5%	96.3%	0.2%
Median Time to Contract	39 Days	41 Days	-4.9%
Median Time to Sale	82 Days	87 Days	-5.7%
New Pending Sales	303,607	302,591	0.3%
New Listings	365,273	342,936	6.5%

View all 2018 yearly Market Reports for [Martin County](#), [Saint Lucie County](#), and [Florida \(statewide\)](#)

Click on the name of the region above to view the reports.



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