

# HOUSECALLS

Gabe's November 2017 Stuart Florida Real Estate HouseCalls



## Simple food safety tips for Thanksgiving

- The best way to thaw a turkey is in a refrigerator, according to USDA recommendations. Allow 24 hours for each four to five pounds in a refrigerator cooled to 40 degrees or below.
- If you must thaw a turkey in cold water, be sure it is in a leak-proof bag. The turkey should be submerged in cold water. Allow 30 minutes per pound. Change the water frequently. USDA recommends every 30

minutes. Cook immediately when thawed.

- Cook turkey to 165 degrees in thickest part of the breast, inner thigh, and inner wing.
- Wash hands with water and soap for 20 seconds before touching any food.
- Don't wash the turkey. According to the USDA, loosely attached bacteria can contaminate the kitchen when you wash meat or poultry. Studies have found bacteria cling to sinks, sponges and towels. Bacteria is killed in the oven.

## Negotiation tips for buyers and sellers

At the most basic level, home sellers and buyers want the same thing: A good price and a smooth deal.

But between price and smooth, there is a lot of wiggle room and emotion.

The key points for a seller, according to Zillow.com:

- A full price or higher
- A pre-approved buyer
- Smooth timing for a move.

Sellers may also want buyers to either waive inspection or be responsible for any repairs.

Before negotiation, the best idea for sellers is to carefully calculate what they need from a buyer.

- Minimum amount of money you'll need, considering outstanding mortgage, any debt you want to clear up, or money for a down payment on another house.

- Decide what personal property you want to go with the house and what you don't want to include in the deal.

- Know how much it will cost to stay in the home during any transition time. This can help in negotiations since a buyer who wants to quickly take possession might save you money. Or, on the

*Happy Thanksgiving  
to you and yours!*



other hand, a buyer who will work with you on timing might be preferable. These considerations can help you choose between offers.

Key idea: Know exactly what you need and don't rush into a deal if you don't have to.

### *Negotiation Tips for buyers*

One key idea to remember: Don't start negotiations too low.

Case in point: Heirs are selling a 40-year-old home on a wooded acreage. The home will need

treatment for mold, new carpets, deep cleaning, and some new fixtures, but the bones are good. The sellers have priced it on the low-end for comparable homes.

The listing agent quickly gets two offers. One for \$5,000 less than the list price, and one for the list price. It's October and the heirs want to sell quickly and they don't want to take the chance of maintaining the home through the winter when home sales are slow. The buyer offering full price is ready to immediately move in. The sellers accept the full price, rejecting the lower one without negotiation. The unsuccessful buyers lost the home they wanted over a mere \$5,000, which on a 30-year loan amounts to just a few dollars a month.

According to credit.com, going in with a too-low offer accomplishes nothing. While a potential buyer can't always know how their offer will be accepted, it's probably not a good idea to offer a lower price if the property is already priced reasonably. The exception may be a foreclosure or a slow market, when sellers might be highly motivated to sell.

If a buyer can know how motivated the seller is, then that influences negotiation. A buyer that must move, might accept a lower bid, especially if the buyer can take possession immediately. Similarly, a buyer with time can afford to wait for the best deal.

## Ask the Expert



### What is a conforming loan?

A conforming loan is one that conforms to Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac guidelines. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are giant government-chartered mortgage companies that buy loans from lenders, allowing lenders to have more flexibility to make new housing loans.

Most everyone who gets a mortgage has a conforming loan.

### How much you can borrow to conform:

Conforming loans are generally limited to \$424,100, although there are higher limits in areas where housing is very expensive. The conforming loan limit can go up to \$636,150 in housing markets, such as certain counties in California and New York, among others.

**Loan-to-value ratio:** Your down payment has to be equal to 20 percent or more of the home's value, but buyers can qualify for an FHA loan with as little as 3 percent down. With a down payment of less than 20 percent, buyers have to pay Private Mortgage Insurance, which can be expensive.

## How To Find a Worthy Charity

When it comes to helping people in need across the world, everyone would agree that charities play a prominent role in ensuring that money makes it to the causes that need it the most. Unfortunately, not all of those charities are created equal and some time should be spent determining which ones will spend those dollars responsibly. According to Consumer Reports, for instance, most people assume that a charity's name tells the whole story about what they are doing for the community they represent.

They use the example of the Disabled Veterans National Foundation. The name implies that they raise a lot of money to help veterans. In fact, less than one-third of the money brought into the organization goes into charitable programs while the rest is used for fundraising and overhead. This should alarm potential donors who think 100 percent of their donation will go towards helping the targeted group. One dollar turning into thirty cents is not an excellent deal in anybody's book. On the other side of the aisle, a charity called The Mission Continues spends nearly 90 percent of its money on charitable pro-

grams and only seven percent on fundraising. While most people tend to think of charities as all being the same, this kind of disparity sheds light on the fact that some are more efficient and ethical than others.

Although it might be impossible to find a great charity by name alone, Kiplinger suggests following a few best practices when it comes to giving. First, don't fall victim to the charity with the loudest voice. Often, charities that employ telemarketers to solicit donations are spending the least amount of money on their cause. It is important for a person to figure out which causes resonate with them the most and then seek out charities that bene-

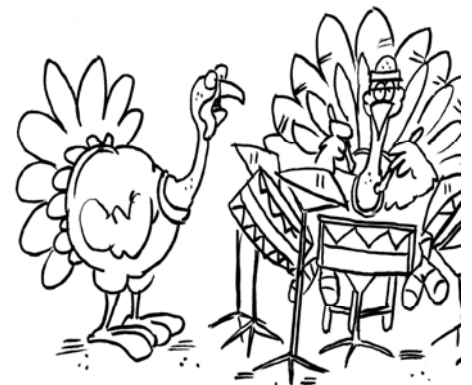
fit them. Secondly, research any charity thoroughly before giving to evaluate how it will handle the money. Charity watchdogs like Charity Navigator will have all of this information publicly displayed. A good rule of thumb is that the best charities spend at least 75 percent of their money on service and 25 percent or less on overhead. If a charity refuses to share this information, then they are probably not meeting these criteria.



**Credit score:** A conforming loan requires a FICO credit score of 620-640. However, an FHA loan requires a credit score of 580. A lower credit score than that requires a higher down payment.

**Debt-to-income ratio:** Your debt-to-income ratio can be no more than 41 percent (although there may be exceptions that raise this percentage) of your gross income.

A non-conforming loan, by contrast, goes over the loan limit and the requirements are stricter. Credit scores must be 680 or higher. The down payment must be 15 percent or higher. Debt-to-income ratio must be 43 percent or less. Generally the borrower shows high cash reserves, according to the Lenders Network.



"I'm glad you're in band. I'm just a little creeped out by the drumsticks."

## Thanksgiving Sleepy: It's about the gobbler, but not the one you might think

It's a become a truism: You get sleepy at Thanksgiving because of all that tryptophan in turkey.

But is true? Yes and no, but mostly no.

It is true that the amino acid tryptophan works as a precursor to other sleep-inducing chemicals. Turkey has lots of it. But cheese and nuts have more, even Tofu-turkey has more, according to Wired.com.

In 1972 a psychiatrist named John Fernstrom looked into the tryptophan connection and found that tryptophan alone does not make you sleepy. Instead, he found that it's really a carb-heavy meal of mashed potatoes, pie, dressing, and bread. Those carbs create loads of sugar and force amino acids to go to work breaking it all down. With amino acids busy fighting sugars, the brain starts converting tryptophan into serotonin and suddenly you feel you just can't watch another third and 10 on the game. Snores ensue.

It's not just the chemistry of the meal, however. The parasympathetic nervous system also has a role to play. This little brain gadget does things in the background so you don't think about them, like breathing. When you eat too much, you have to digest a lot. The parasympathetic nervous system kicks in to give the body energy to digest and takes away energy elsewhere. You feel tired and it's because you ate a really big carb-loaded meal. Too late to do anything about it. Just kick off your shoes and don't blame the turkey.



## Thanksgiving by the numbers

- Total number of Turkeys that are consumed on Thanksgiving Day, 51,650,000.
- Total U.S. spending on Thanksgiving dinner food, \$2,983,000,000.
- Average household spending on Thanksgiving dinner, \$59.18.
- Average household spending on Thanksgiving weekend, \$342.
- Number of families that will travel for Thanksgiving, 39,000,000.
- Number of places in the U.S. named Plymouth, 37.
- Average cost per pound of Turkey, \$1.20
- Average number of Turkeys raised in the U.S. each year, 254 million.
- Annual consumption of turkey by the average American, 16 pounds.

Source: *USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, Statisticsbrain.Com*

## The top toys for Christmas, according to retailers

The hottest toy in 2016 is coming your way again.

A new Hatchimal, the toy egg that hatches a magical creature, is expected to be on the top of shoppers lists this year, according to Walmart. Order early if you want this item. The toy was gone from shelves in December 2016.

Most popular again this year are toys based on movies and television.

The Star Wars franchise keeps pumping out toys. This year, Littlebit company is introducing the Star Wars Droid Inventor Kit, featuring a very talented R2D2 robot. Shoppers will also find tons of Lego and other kits for Star Wars characters.

Barbie debuts for the holidays with the DreamHorse and Doll, a pricey toy pushing \$90.

For \$298, two kids, up to age 7, can fit in the Disney Frozen 12-Volt Ride-On Sleigh with speeds up to 2.5 mph. Flashing lights and magical tune included.

If the family enjoyed the pie-in-the-face game last year, try Soggy Doggy board game. The game centers around a spongy toy dog that gets increasingly wet as players move around the game. The key is to avoid being the one to make him shake and, naturally, get everyone wet.

Disney Princess fans might like the Enchanted Cupcake Party game. Fans of the book Flight of the Jaquins can also buy the board game.

Fingerlings are supposedly hot items. These little characters hold onto fingers and other objects.

Toys for boys feature lots of the usual cars and blasters. Among them:

- \* Adventure Force Light Command Light-up Motorized Blaster
- \* Disney/Pixar Cars 3 Ultimate Florida Speedway
- \* Nerf Rival Nemesis MXVII
- \* Monster Jam Grave Digger

Fisher-Price Zoom 'n Crawl Monster leads crawlers on a merry chase, spitting balls and zig-zagging around.

FurReal takes stuffed animals a step further by making the toys interactive. The new Roarin' Tyler, the Playful Tiger responds to sounds and motions. It even has its own play toy. The tiger retails for \$117.



# November 2017



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 ALL SAINTS DAY	2	3	4
5 Daylight saving time ends	6	7 Vote!	8	9	10 VETERANS DAY	11
12 Nat'l. Pizza Day	13 World Kindness Day	14	15	16 Great American Smokeout	17	18
19	20	21	22	23 THANKS-GIVING	24 Black Friday	25 Small Business Saturday
26	27 Cyber Monday	28	29	30		

## Florida Single Family Homes September 2017

Click on the Image for the full report

Monthly Market Detail - September 2017  
Single Family Homes  
Florida





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Summary Statistics	September 2017	September 2016	Percent Change Year-over-Year
Closed Sales	18,030	22,653	-20.4%
Paid in Cash	4,698	6,344	-25.9%
Median Sale Price	\$239,900	\$223,000	7.6%
Average Sale Price	\$306,770	\$289,781	5.9%
Dollar Volume	\$5.5 Billion	\$6.6 Billion	-15.7%
Median Percent of Original List Price Received	96.4%	96.2%	0.2%
Median Time to Contract	38 Days	41 Days	-7.3%
Median Time to Sale	85 Days	90 Days	-5.6%
New Pending Sales	16,284	23,346	-30.2%
New Listings	18,493	26,715	-30.8%
Pending Inventory	22,710	20,024	13.4%

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