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News To Move You Forward

Brought to you by Jill Scheppler, Bob McManus, Nicole Ellis & Angie Domine

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Best Backyard BBQ Ever: How to Make It Happen

Nothing says summer more invitingly than steaks sizzling on the grill. Whether it's a small family gathering or a fabulous shindig, when you start up the grill, you have an instant party. How can you make sure your culinary creations are a hit? It doesn't take study at the Cordon Bleu, but it does take a bit of know-how. The first rule is to stay safe. That includes washing everything, never reusing the plate you designate for raw meats, and keeping water handy in case of flare-ups. It also means no rare hamburgers. The Official Scott Robert's Website offers additional tips that are certain to make your party pop. Here are 10 of his best.

1. If you're using briquettes, light them about 30 minutes before starting to grill. This gives them time to heat and avoids the taste of starter fluid.
2. When using charcoal, line the inside of your grill with aluminum foil for faster cleanup.
3. Choose marbled meats for tenderness.
4. Make chicken skin crispy by rubbing it with oil or butter before cooking.
5. Don't pierce meat during cooking lest the juices escape.
6. Coat salted veggies with butter, wrap tightly in aluminum foil, and "throw it on the grill."
7. Add salt to meats *after* cooking to avoid drying them out.
8. Use a stiff wire brush or a piece of crumpled foil to keep your grill grate clean.
9. When using a marinade, marinate overnight or at least an hour before grilling.
10. Experiment with different marinades to find a flavor you love.

Are You a First-Time Buyer? Get My Free Guide



Buying your first home is a big step and one that is likely to impact your financial future for years to come.

Make it easier by requesting my free guide, "How First-Timers Can Make a Wise Buy."

Just call me at 715-387-1122 and I'll send it right out to you.

Prepping Your Home for Sale: Get the Most Bang for Your Buck

Every seller wants to maximize his or her profit. Partnering with a real estate agent is a great start. Homeowners can further increase their bottom line with a few simple steps. To get the most out of your house, complete the following before you list.

Hire your own home inspector. If a buyer's inspector finds issues with your home, you can expect your profit to shrink. Stay one step ahead by hiring your own home inspector to unearth any potential issues.

Invest in repairs. In addition to addressing any trouble the home inspection reveals, it's a good idea to have cosmetic issues addressed. Prospective buyers notice things like cracked tile, chipped baseboards, or a squeaky floorboard, and this will be reflected in their offer.

Upgrade where it counts. You don't have to renovate your whole house to turn a healthier profit. Make small, impactful swaps, such as switching out lighting, cabinet hardware, or shower heads for cleaner, more contemporary options.

Add a few new accessories. Fresh flowers and potted plants go a long way in making a room feel inviting. For a cozier living room, drape a cable-knit blanket over the couch. String Edison bulb lights over a patio and put an Adirondack chair on the front porch. These small touches add major warmth.

Treat it like a model home. To sell your house quickly and for the most money, treat it like a house you've been hired to stage. Put personal effects into storage, declutter, remove artwork that could be seen as too loud, and make sure the house is absolutely spotless.

News To Move You Forward

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What You Need to Know before Becoming a Landlord

Thinking of becoming a landlord? While this can be financially and personally rewarding, you must do your homework before you take the leap.

To help you learn the ropes and avoid any costly missteps, here are some handy tips of the trade.

It cannot be overstated how important it is for landlords to do their pre-closing homework.

During the home inspection, remember to take a thorough look at the property to see what will need to be repaired or replaced.

For example, you might want to change the toilets to low-flow models. You'll also probably want to invest in essential upgrades to three common areas: water, door locks, and flooring.

Don't make the rookie mistake of underestimating the costs of fixing and maintaining the property, both before and after a tenant has moved in.

Most landlords account for insurance and taxes, but it's easy to miss expenses like

garbage, gardening, and regular maintenance.

According to *Money*, you should set aside at least 35 to 45% of your annual rental income to cover these costs. (And when you're calculating this income, it's a good rule of thumb to account for only 10 or 11 monthly payments per year.)

When it comes to finding a tenant, don't be too relaxed. Interview prospective tenants on the phone first to find out if they meet your requirements. Then, it's important to check your potential tenants' credit and speak to their references. Confirm the source and amount of their income. It should be at least 2.5 times the annual rent. You should also learn what's legal in your town. For example, can you ban pets?

Once you've found a great tenant, act fast to get the lease signed. From there, never forget that you're running a business and your tenant is a customer. Treat your customer right, and success is more likely to come your way.

Ask the Agent: This Month's Question

When is the best time to sell my home?

Sellers logically want to put their homes on the market when they will sell quickly and for the best price. To achieve this, they must find the busiest home-selling season — for their market. In most areas, this season is spring. For many regions, this time of year offers warmer weather and more daylight for shopping. It's also prime time for families to buy if their goal is to get settled in before the next school year begins. Launching in spring, the busy season typically peaks in June, then tapers off as fall arrives.

However, some areas are less affected by weather changes or may be affected by other factors. The timing and demand for houses may be more or less pronounced at different times of year, depending on the location. This is where real estate agent expertise comes in handy. Your agent is intimately familiar with the local market and can best advise you when your market is hot.

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