
Valley of the Sun Real Estate Update

March, 2004

Little Mistakes and Big Mistakes

Coming Clean & Paying Up

As many of you know, I pride myself on always having the right answer, or knowing where to look it up if I don't. So it is with some chagrin that I find myself called upon to acknowledge a mistake that found its way into my January newsletter. In the Culture Corner segment, my capsule review of "School of Rock" featured a comparison between Jack Black and the well-known Mr. Belushi of "Animal House" fame.

Unfortunately, I mis-fired on the comparison, and instead of referring to John Belushi as I should have, I cited his brother Jim. And while Jim has carved out a decent career for himself, he has little of the manic brilliance that made John such a star. So this was a small but significant mistake, one that undermined the intended meaning of the review. Alert reader Jim Tolar picked up on my error immediately, and his proof-reading skills have earned him and his charming wife Kathleen a pair of movie passes. This policy will continue into the future, so you too can win a prize for being the first reader to notify me of a factual mistake in one of my newsletters.

The Lesson to be Learned

We live in a complex and challenging world, and mistakes happen all the time. We try to protect ourselves from the worst mistakes by seeking out qualified professionals, but even a well-trained specialist can slip up from time to time. As one of my colleagues has pointed out, anyone can come in, do the job, and leave. And anyone can make a mistake. The mark of a true professional is how they respond to those mistakes.

In the real estate market, I work with lots of different specialists: other agents, title officers, lenders, plumbers, roofers, inspectors, and more. Each of these

service providers can have a huge impact on the success of a transaction. Over time, I have developed contacts with professionals who know how to do the job right, and who stand behind their work.

When you are involved in a real estate transaction, that's a pretty big deal. In choosing a vendor, don't be fooled by gimmicks and low prices. Make sure they have solid references, and make sure they have suitable insurance to cover any mistakes. Once an error has occurred—and eventually, one will—ignoring it only makes things worse. Choose to work with professionals who will stand by you in the tough times, and who will work with you to find the best way to resolve the problem. While perfection is always elusive, you should expect excellence, reliability, and accountability from all of your vendors.

On the Home Front

For such a short month, February seemed to be filled with plenty of fun & excitement. From our big Frisbee tournament on the first weekend (very successful!) to an evening out to see "Noises Off" at the Copperstate Dinner Theater to ongoing tennis lessons as Jill and I try to get back into a game we really enjoy, there has been much to keep us on the go. My professional life has been busy as well, with the local real estate market heating up now that Spring is here and mortgage rates are still so low.

The big news for the month was Jill's plunge into the world of laser eye surgery. She has been looking into this for a year or more, and finally last week all the stars were in the right alignment and she was able to make an appointment to get the procedure done. It's taking a little time for her eyes to adjust, but she is very happy with the results so far, and optimistic that her vision will continue to improve over the next several weeks.



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Recipe of the Month

Coquilles St. Jacques

These appetizers were very popular when I served them at a recent dinner party. The fancy French name makes it seem impressive, but the recipe is actually pretty simple. The scallops do require time in the broiler, so this dish goes best with an entrée you can prepare on the stovetop, like a pasta dish or pan-fried chicken or steak.

12 sea scallops, cut into 2-3 pieces each, or 36 bay scallops
2/3 cup water
4 Tbsp medium-dry white wine
1 bay leaf
Salt & black pepper
Lemon wedges and bay leaves for garnish
3 Tbsp butter
3 Tbsp all-purpose flour
4 Tbsp light cream
1/2 cup (about 100 g) grated Gruyere cheese
4 large scallop shells or medium-sized ramekins

1. In a small pan, combine the water, wine, and bay leaf, and season to taste with salt & pepper. Bring the mix to a boil, then lower the heat and add the scallops.
2. Poach the scallops for about 1 minute, or just until they are tender when tested with the tip of a knife. Lift the scallops out with a slotted spoon, place them in a small bowl, then strain and set aside the liquid.
3. Melt the butter in a separate pan, add the flour, and cook for about 1 minute, stirring constantly. Gradually stir in the reserved cooking liquid and bring to a boil. Stir constantly until the mix thickens. Reduce the heat and simmer gently for about 5 minutes, then reduce the heat again and stir in the cream and half of the cheese.
4. Stir the scallops into the sauce, divide into shells or ramekins, and sprinkle the remaining cheese on top.
5. Place filled shells on a baking sheet and broil about 3 inches from the heat for 5 minutes or until the cheese has melted and the sauce turns golden and bubbling. Garnish with lemon wedges and bay leaves and serve.

Be careful—the shells or ramekins will be very hot when they come out of the broiler. Make sure your guests don't try to pick them up with their bare hands.

If you really want to treat yourself to a rich delight, you can make this into a main course by keeping them all to yourself and serving along with a green salad, fresh bread, and a crisp white wine.

Culture Corner

Quick reviews of some recent favorites

Books: Louis Bayard's mystery novel "Mr. Timothy" follows the classic Dickens character Tiny Tim into his not-so-tiny adulthood. The main lines of the plot offer a rollicking adventure through the seedy underbelly of Victorian London, but the story's tone comes from Timothy's reflections on mourning, loss, and redemption.

Music: After hearing Bad Religion's "Sorrow" on the radio, I tracked down their 2002 album *The Process of Belief*. If you want to listen to great ska-punk rhythms laced with funny and clever lyrics attacking the 21st-century corporate culture of government, religion, and multi-national consumerism, check this out. It rocks.

Movies: I initially shied away from "Butterfly Effect" because Ashton Kutcher's previous work has inspired little confidence, but he does a good job in this movie. The story blends suspense, sci-fi, and well-placed humor as it follows the classic question of how traveling back in time might affect the future. The film also offers a bleak commentary on the horrors of child abuse while raising the issue of what we can control and what is pre-destined.

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