

Valley of the Sun Real Estate Update

October, 2007

Cosmetic Changes & Structural Improvements

No, this won't be an article about what you can do to improve the value of your home or make it easier to sell in a slow market. That's a great topic, and it will be featured in an up-coming newsletter, but this month I want to let you know about a change we have made here in our office.

Last month, ERA Lucas Realty Group, as our company has been known for a while, completed a merger with Hunt Real Estate ERA. Our new combined company is called Hunt Real Estate ERA, Lucas Division. It's quite a mouthful when we answer the phone, but I think that minor inconvenience is more than made up for by what we have gained by taking the next step in the growth of our company.

Some of you may remember when we joined the ERA franchise back in the Fall of 2004. At the time, we wanted access to the type of client-service programs that were only cost-effective as part of a larger organization, and that proved to be a good decision. In the years since, ERA's Guaranteed Sale Program has given our home-sellers a valuable tool, giving them the opportunity to remove much of the uncertainty from the home sale process. And ERA's LeadRouter internet engine has enabled us to develop a very robust presence on the Web, and allows us to respond to customer inquiries within minutes.

Our latest move is one that will bring changes both obvious and more subtle. The first thing you will probably notice is a change in our marketing materials. We've got new colors, a new logo, and some new brochures. I like our new look, and the buzz surrounding our new identity offers a good opportunity for me to be in touch with you, but these changes are superficial and won't have any effect on our core business.

More significant will be the market power & back-office technology we will now be able to use. Hunt Real Estate is by far the most successful franchise in the ERA family, with over 30 offices and 800 agents in the eastern US. Like us, they have built the business up from a small family operation to a leading position in the industry by valuing hard work, customer service, and marketplace knowledge over short-term gimmicks.

I am pleased to be affiliated with such a successful company, and flattered that our business model was aggressive enough to attract their sizable financial investment in our growth. At a time when our industry overall is struggling, merely keeping pace really means falling behind. It is exciting to be out in front of the pack and to see our ability to help our clients continue to expand. As always, I look forward to the opportunity to speak with you regarding any questions you may have about your home, your neighborhood, or the future of our local real estate market.

On the Home Front



It seems like the kids are into new things every day. Bryn has just started on solid foods, and already she is pouting if we don't make her rice cereal fast enough. And she loves to watch everything her older brother does, so she is likely to be a handful on her own pretty soon.

Taran keeps expanding his boundaries too. He loves trips to the zoo, where he can feed the tortoises once and then tell us about it for weeks afterwards. He is doing very well at his new school, too, and he teaches us a new song every week!



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LUCAS DIVISION

Recipe of the Month

Penne with Pears, Walnuts & Asiago

Part of the fun of coming up with new recipes is the opportunity to try out some things that might sound a little odd but turn out great when you actually get a chance to prepare them. This recipe, yet another adapted from the *Arizona Republic's* weekly menu planner, is a great example of that. It sounded just strange enough to try, and I'm glad I did. The pears, butter, & cheese combine to create a richly flavored dressing for the pasta, while the walnuts add a complementary taste and texture. Preparation is simple, and takes just one pot.

8 ounces uncooked penne
3 pears (ripe ones work best)
2 Tablespoons butter
1 cup chopped walnuts
1 cup grated Asiago cheese

1. Cook pasta according to package directions in a large pot.
2. Trim pears to remove seeds and chop into bite-size pieces.
3. When pasta is done, drain & set aside. Return pot to stove over medium-high heat & melt butter until it begins to brown. Add walnuts & toss for 30 seconds.
4. Add pasta back into pot & toss for another 30 seconds.
5. Add pear & cheese and toss until cheese melts.

Makes 4 servings.

Complement the meal with a simple spinach salad (and toss in some sliced hard-boiled eggs if you want to add some protein to the mix.) The pear & walnut mix lends itself to either white wine or red, so treat yourself according to your mood.



Culture Corner

Quick reviews of some recent favorites

Food: With it's upscale location, on 40th Street north of Camelback, **Chelsea's Kitchen** is notable both for its menu and its people-watching opportunities. With everything from burgers and taco platters to exotic seafood dishes, you'll have plenty of options for your tastebuds as your eyes take in the chic atmosphere. The back patio will be a beautiful spot to enjoy an evening meal as the weather cools.

Movies: I'm not sure **The Departed** would have gotten my vote for Best Picture, but it is still a very well-constructed film with a top-notch cast (the further we get from Titanic, the more I like Leo DiCaprio). The brutal story revolves around the interchangeable identities of cops & crooks in South Boston, and the parallel structures of their organizations as they fight for survival.

Food: Working at my office got a bit nicer since a new spot opened for lunch & dinner. **Spice's** offers Mediterranean food, serving all the basics like gyros and falafel. Be sure to try the bourekas, too—it's a tasty cheese pastry. And they serve great French fries, too! At Ray & McClintock in Chandler. Stop by & say hi while you are there!

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