

Valley of the Sun

December 2008 Real Estate Update

In for a Dime, or In for a Dollar?

It's no secret that times are tough. While the conclusion of the recent election cycle may allow our government officials to stop campaigning and get back to running the country, the turmoil in the financial markets and our related troubles in the real estate world are likely to be with us well into 2009. In these circumstances, it is important to pay more attention to your expenses and trim them where you can.

But it is also important to retain a long-term perspective, and to avoid the trap of skimping on important home maintenance items which can lead to big repair bills down the road. This is especially true if you have rental homes or vacation homes, where your limited time at the properties may encourage an "out-of-sight, out-of-mind" approach to maintenance.

Since we all make mistakes, and it is much better to learn from the mistakes of others than from our own, let me pass along an experience we recently had with our rental property. The home is not too old, in good condition, and we have a responsible tenant there. But because

we don't live there, we sometimes overlook the basic items we

should be taking care of, like getting the air conditioner serviced regularly. As a result, we found ourselves needing to get some emergency work done on the compressor. That was largely covered by our home warranty policy, but the deductible would have gone a long way towards paying for the maintenance we could have done instead.

The kicker came two weeks later, when the HVAC drain pan in the attic overflowed, causing the drywall in the garage ceiling to collapse. (Fortunately, our tenant's car was parked outside.) This time, our homeowner's insurance covered most of the bill, but the deductible was enough to pay for several years of regular service, and the problem itself—a plugged drain line—would have been easily detected & quickly fixed during a routine check-up.

Your home is a huge investment, and despite the downturn in pricing it will probably remain a big part of your financial future. Don't make the mistake we did of thinking that "no news is good news" when it comes to preventative maintenance. Not only is ongoing attention less costly in the long run than sudden repairs, but it is also much easier to budget for planned work than for emergencies.

So do as I say, and not as I do! And if you need some recommendations on reliable contractors, let me know. I would be happy to pass



Ken Mayer
REALTOR®

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Recipe of the Month

Penne with Roasted Butternut Squash

I was in the mood for a fall-themed dish, and this recipe popped up in my Google search. It has just the rich & hearty flavors I was hoping for, and preparation is easy. Peeling & dicing the squash can take a little while, but you can do that ahead of time & refrigerate it to save time.

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|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2 lbs butternut squash | 1/2 cup half-and-half |
| 2 Tbs olive oil | 3 scallions, with greens, chopped |
| 1 1/4 tsp dried sage | |
| 1/8 tsp black pepper | 3/4 lbs penne pasta |
| 3/4 tsp salt, split | 1/4 lb bacon |
| 1 cup mascarpone cheese | 1/4 cup grated parmesan |

1. Preheat oven to 450°. Peel the squash, halve it lengthwise, remove the seeds, and dice into 1/2" cubes. Place the diced squash in a sealable bag or bowl and toss with olive oil, sage, pepper, and 1/4 tsp of the salt. Spread squash on a baking sheet and roast for 15-20 minutes, turning occasionally, until tender & starting to brown.
2. In a medium bowl, stir together the mascarpone, half-and-half, scallions, and remaining 1/2 tsp salt. Set aside.
3. Cook the bacon until it is crisp, about 4 minutes in the microwave. Crumble & set aside
4. Meanwhile, cook the pasta in a large pot following package directions. When pasta is done, drain & return to cooking pot. Stir in the squash, bacon, and mascarpone sauce.. Top with Parmesan & serve immediately. Serves 4.

Culture corner

Food: I stumbled on a nice find in the far east valley recently. **Superstition Ranch Market** has a wide range of fresh produce at bargain prices, and they even have specialty items like honey in the honeycomb. It's worth a visit if you are in the area (Apache Trail west of Meridian) - and if you plan to stock up on produce, it's worth your time to make a special trip just for that.

Movies: Jill & I enjoyed a rare quiet evening at home recently, so we finally watched **Pan's Labyrinth** on dvd. It is a fairy tale in the old sense, filled with wonders but also with perils, and nothing so neat as a happy ending. The story follows a young girl struggling to find her way in a grown-up world, who is forced to confront the need for responsibility and sacrifice. It is in Spanish with subtitles, but the rich visuals will still draw you right in.

Food: Another good east valley find is **Giant Hamburgers**, on Lindsay south of Broadway. It's an unremarkable strip-mall location, but the food is true to its name: huge & fresh-made burgers served with lots of toppings and a generous side of fries. And if a big helping of beef doesn't fill you up, you can always top yourself off with one of their giant slices of pie. So reward yourself with a real meal, not more fast food. Yum!

Ken, how much is my home worth?

If you would like a free Current Market Analysis of your home, please fill out this form:

- _____ I'm not thinking of selling my home. I'm just curious about value. Please send me a complimentary current market analysis.
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On the Home Front



Halloween has always been one of my favorite holidays, and it is even more fun now that the kids are getting excited about it. Taran spent the whole week before reminding us that it would be a special day, and he was very proud of his airplane costume. Bryn is still a little bit young to get the whole idea, but she was happy to follow Taran's lead and she figured out the important parts pretty quickly—and she was one cute dragon, too. Now she carries her pink pumpkin bucket around like a purse, so I expect she will be ready for next year!

We had a great day out in Apache Junction in October, volunteering with Habitat for Humanity to help build a new home for a hard-working family. The early-morning start gave us a chance to see lightning flashes over the Superstition Mountains on our way to the site, but the weather for the rest of the day was sunny & warm—



a good thing since we spent most our time putting on the roof! Our group got rave reviews from the superintendent, and we all look forward to the next chance to come out & lend a hand. Stay tuned for

**Habitat for Humanity
Build Day, 10/11/2008**



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Ken Mayer

Hunt Real Estate
4040 W. Ray Rd #8
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