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Tips For a Stress-Free Holiday Season

Strategize Gift-Wrapping

Start wrapping presents early, but add ribbons, bows and tags later (label gifts with sticky notes so that you don't forget who gets what). Unadorned boxes are stackable and, as a result, will be easy to store and transport.

Think Small For Decor

A full-size Christmas tree may make a big impression in your home, but don't underestimate little ones. Miniature potted evergreens, arranged along a hallway or by the fireplace, add a lovely - and living - touch. Rotate them throughout the season so that they get sufficient light. After the holidays, plant them outdoors.

Tackle To-Dos in Good Company

If you consider writing and addressing holiday cards to be more tedious than fun, don't trudge through the process alone. Invite friends over for an evening of "card pooling" (or gift wrapping or cooking baking). With a bottle of wine and more than a few laughs, the task will be easy and enjoyable one to cross off your list.

Update Your Address Book

Retire your old address book and all its scribbled-out phone numbers. Save the contact information of your friends and family members on your computer. If you don't want to transfer the contents all in one go, type in a page each day - after checking your email, for example - or enlist a computer-savvy child to help in exchange for a little extra spending money. You'll find it easier (and far neater) to input new details, plus you can copy and paste directly from emails. For holiday cards, print the address onto self-adhesive labels, and use decorative scissors to trim the edges before adhering them to envelopes.

Keep Universal Tokens on Hand

Chances are you'll need some last-minute gifts, either for an unannounced guest or for friends who extend 11th-hour invitations. Stock up on a few items that would appeal to almost everyone (including you, should they still be in your care come January). Several jars of locally made preserves are good to have on hand, as are beautifully wrapped soaps and bottles of wine.

Make Space in Advance

Before holiday gatherings, relocate your coats from the hall closet to a less central one so that guests will have a place to hang theirs, rather than piling them atop a bed. Be sure to have ample hangers, plus a basket for gloves and hats. Also, clear out the refrigerator if

guests will be bringing beer, Champagne, or foods that should be chilled. You may need to relinquish oven time to a relative's side dish, so plan your cooking schedule accordingly.

Tend the Bar

Take inventory of liquor-cabinet staples, including tonic water and other mixers, and restock those that are running low. Also chill a few bottles of Champagne, as the best holiday fetes are often spontaneous.

Tip Smartly

Put gratuities into personalized cards. Amounts vary by region and length of service. Here are some basic guidelines: cleaning person, one week's pay; newspaper carrier, up to \$30; babysitter, one night of sitting, plus a gift from your children.

Fly Lightly

When traveling for the holidays, lighten your load by purchasing gift cards rather than bulky presents. If you must bring gift-wrapped items, package them in such a way that airport security will be able to examine the contents; a box in which the top and bottom are wrapped separately, with a card and the ribbon tucked inside for attaching later, is one option.

Buy Baking Staples

Cut back on last-minute grocery trips by stocking up on baking ingredients early. Be sure you have the basics you'll need most often: butter, flour, granulated and brown sugars, baking powder and soda, yeast and vanilla extract.

Remember to Unwind

During the merry mayhem of cocktail parties and shopping-mall jaunts, it's important to enjoy some peace and quiet every so often. Before your schedule fills up, pencil in a few personal hours (or even days). Solidifying the plans, whether buying advance tickets to an afternoon movie, going to the spa, or making an appointment for a manicure, ensures that the much-needed downtime won't be passed over for more-pressing errands.

Draw Up a Budget and a Gift List Before You Shop

This will ensure even distribution (among say, your kids, or your grandkids) and eliminate aimless shopping expeditions. Organize lists by category (clothing, electronics, toys), so you'll have to make only one trip to each store.

For full article go to: <http://www.marthastewart.com/274598/tips-for-a-stress-free-holiday-season/@center/1009074/christmas-party-planning-menu-ideas#233674>

Sales Continue Robust in November

November 2015 home sales outstripped those of the previous year by 8.5%. 626 homes exchanged hands last month, making it the best November since 2007. "If this is starting to sound a little repetitive," says the President of the London and St. Thomas Association of REALTORS®, "it's because January, May, August and November have all been the best months of their kind since 2007, the peak year for real estate sales here in the London and St. Thomas area." 2015 promises to finish off strong with overall sales up 9.7% Year to Date.



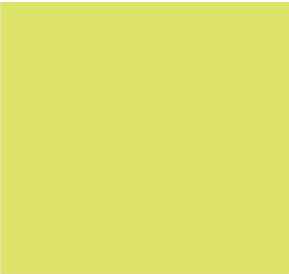
Breakdown of November Residential Sales

Type	Average Price	Increase from 2014
Detached	\$282,348	4.3%
Condo	\$189,649	3.7%
Total Residential	\$264,654	4.1%

Type	Units Sold	Average Price
2 Storey	143	\$373,983
Bungalow	107	\$199,854
Ranch	78	\$318,344
Townhouse Condo	67	\$166,885
High Rise Apt. Condo	27	\$167,026

The real estate market continued to perform well in St. Thomas in November. Sixty-two homes sold in that City, making it the best November since LSTAR started breaking out St. Thomas statistics in 2006. The average price of a home in St. Thomas Year-to-Date stands at \$217,309 up 8.7%.

Dec 1, 2015 - London and St. Thomas Association of REALTORS®



Coffee and Cookie Brownies

Ingredients

- 1 16.5 oz package of refrigerated sugar cookie dough
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 19.5 oz package milk chocolate brownie mix
- 1/2 c vegetable oil
- 1/3 c coffee liqueur or cooled strong coffee
- 1 c semisweet or bittersweet chocolate pieces



Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Press sugar cookie dough into the bottom of a 13 x 9 x 2 inch baking pan; set aside
2. In a large bowl combine eggs, brownie mix, oil and liqueur until just combined. Spread batter over sugar cookie dough. Sprinkle with chocolate pieces.
3. Bake for 40 minutes or until edges are set. Cool in pan on a wire rack. To serve, cut into bars.

<http://www.bhg.com/recipe/brownies/coffee-and-cookie-brownies/?>

Need warming up after the cooling market? Are you questioning the Real Estate Market? I have the knowledge required to make certain we find the best solution to fit your needs, now and in the future. Give me a call, and I'll put my experience to work for you.



May your homes be filled with fun surprises and wonderful memories this holiday season.

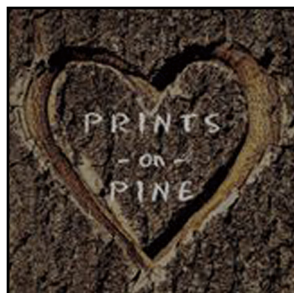
When you're ready to make memories in a new home, call me for all of your real estate needs!

Happy Holidays!

FOR FREE HELPFUL REAL ESTATE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES CONNECT WITH JANE:

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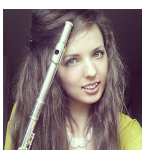


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