



Kindness All Year Long



During the holiday season, we pause to consider just how fortunate we are and to remind ourselves of the less fortunate. We

are grateful for all of our friends and clients who, through their loyalty and trust in us, have made our success possible. What we strive to do every day, though, is to remember to recognize and appreciate beauty in life, wherever, whenever, and from whomever may be expressing or displaying acts of kindness and beauty. The rewards are many for you and those who you express your gratitude to. Every day, there are little things that people do that rarely receive attention. Those little things can range from demonstrating exceptional knowledge and wisdom to esoteric things like someone taking the time to present themselves in a professional and courteous manner. Think about

it. From the barista you may be getting coffee from in the morning, to the receptionist at your work, your coworkers, and many other people you come into contact through the day, the people around you deserve your notice for the good things they do. Let them know!

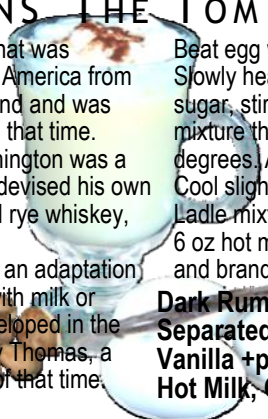
The benefit to you is greater success in life. Suddenly, when seeing life in this way and expressing it daily, you will notice. We promise. And even if you may feel sometimes that you don't have much to be grateful for, remember: In spite of what you may be feeling, there are greater than 90% of the world's inhabitants that would probably love to have it as good as you, in spite of any difficulties you may be experiencing.

Enjoy the holidays. Touch someone dear. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



LIBATIONS THE TOM & JERRY

Eggnog is a drink that was adapted in colonial America from egg drinks in England and was very popular during that time. Even George Washington was a fan of eggnog and devised his own recipe that included rye whiskey, rum and sherry. The Tom & Jerry is an adaptation that is served hot with milk or water and was developed in the mid 1800's by Jerry Thomas, a popular bartender of that time.



Beat egg whites to a stiff froth. Slowly heat the yolks and add the sugar, stirring continuously until mixture thickens and reaches 160 degrees. Add vanilla and cloves. Cool slightly, then fold into whites. Ladle mixture into large mugs with 6 oz hot milk. Add shot of the rum and brandy to each mug, stir well.

Dark Rum, Brandy, 6 Eggs Separated, 2 Cups Sugar, Vanilla +pinch ground clove, Hot Milk, Ground Nutmeg

THE BEST CLIENTS IN THE WORLD! Project Central

The power of enlightened design and thoughtful restraint for real improvement.

For years, we've been nagging you to call us when making improvements or contemplating remodeling your home. We've also implored you to put us in touch

"they had basically lived in the house since 2006, FOR FREE!"

with your family, friends, and coworkers when they may be thinking of buying a home. Here's a real example of how we deliver on our promise to help you better than anyone else.

Heidi and Jane came to us in late 2006 seeking a home. After evaluating their needs and looking at a lot of overpriced homes, Mike suggested they come back to a small, modest home in the Loyal Heights neighborhood of Ballard. The mid century home was basically all original with an unimpressive street presence. Because of the lack of improvements and a slightly too high price, the home had set on market a while and was ripe for a lower offer. With some encouragement and with the cautionary advice that improvements would need to be carefully made if they were to be able to preserve and build equity, over time.

We can't help it! We have design and improvement on the brain all of the time. From the moment we walk into a house we are busy critiquing and virtually remodeling the space in ways that we feel will bring better use of space, lighting, color, and function. Please allow us to discuss two aspects of home improvement that can help to bring better satisfaction with the end result and for your wallet.

Design: First, one small clarification: We define "good design", for the purposes of this article, as design that is well regarded and pleasing to a substantial majority of the home-buying public and that isn't subject to whimsy. What looks great this year should evoke a similar reaction in 10 years. With the proliferation of home

"EVERYONE is a design god or goddess"

improvement and design shows on HGTV one might think that EVERYONE is a design god or goddess. (For a visual, please imagine Leon rolling his eyes) Unfortunately, there are a great many people who are "esthetically challenged". Before you start buying materials,

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Best Clients cont.

They pursued the home and we helped them acquire it for a relatively good price and favorable terms.

Now, we could have done like so many people in real estate and ended the relationship with Heidi and Jane there, but we didn't. Instead, we continued to be involved in their lives and be active partners in their home ownership. We also, by the way, became fast friends. When it came time to update the heating system, they sought our opinion and referrals. When it came time to build the deck, add exterior street appeal, and remodel the bathroom, we assisted them with cost effective, thoughtful designs and mindful attention to detail.

Fast forward to Spring 2011. Heidi and Jane, unfortunately, decided to move away and asked us to sell their home. This is where listening to us and trusting us paid off in spades. Now conventional wisdom and the "experts" would have you believe that if you bought a home in 2006 and tried to sell it in 2011, that you will lose money, but after just six days on market, we solicited multiple offers on their, now, fabulously modernized home. In spite of overall depreciation in the market and because they bought in the right neighborhood, made the right improvements, and priced their home realistically, as we advised, they had basically lived in the house since 2006, FOR FREE! This is the most concrete example of what we have preached for years; we know real estate better than anyone else and if you seek and follow our advice, the benefit is yours. So the next time you envision an improvement, repair, or remodel project, call, text or email us. If you have friends, family, or co-workers contemplating the same, have them contact us. And if you are looking to move up, scale down, or sell... well, you know the drill.

MAX'S MUSINGS HOW SANTA CAME TO BE



You probably don't know the story of how Santa Claus really got his start as the most popular hipster with the younger crowd. Kris was just another reindeer herdsman in the arctic circle. He was a proud, meat head type and drove around in a jacked up 4x4 rig. You know, the ones that have the naked lady mud flaps on the back? He would go four wheeling on his way to herding each evening, cranking out loud, hip hop music, including way too much of the early Black Eye'd Peas (yes, they're never going away). He had developed a not so good reputation as the guy that would always drive

through and ruin the village ice sculpture display, each year. He would also organize big, outdoor parties where they would drink batches of a local, illegal brew made from pine tree sap and tundra lichens called Reindeer Nog. He also had a motley crew of little friends who tended to follow him into just about every misadventure Kris dreamed up.

Well, Kripster (as he was known to his low waisted pants friends) managed to get the attention of more than a few too many locals; the bad kind of attention. They didn't like his reckless driving or his all night parties and the way he was corrupting the local, height challenged youth. So they took action. Although the village really never had the need for law enforcement, the good citizens decided to hire the village's first Sheriff, officer Grinch. Without wasting time, Grinch managed to catch Kris in the act of spinning around in his 4x4 at the local ice skating rink. Kris and his little friends had met the end of the line. Their fate was now in the

hands of the icy villages elders. Now, since they were fair minded, progressive, and Kris didn't have a prior record, they decided to give Kris and his little friends a chance at community service. They ordered them to do six weeks service making toys for the village's children and to deliver them during a night in late December. He also consented to, that in order to bring more shame upon himself, he would wear a red suit with funny black boots, a silly, furry hat, then meet all of the kids at the mall and dictate toy, wish lists for all of the kids. What only a few weeks prior had been a lazy band of diminutive thugs churned out a batch of toys for Kris to deliver during the night of December 24th. Kris, warmed with Reindeer Nog, took to his sleigh and the first Christmas occurred.

Flying reindeer, you ask? A bottomless bag of Christmas gifts? Some say these were Christmas miracles. Skeptical locals think they are stories Kris told after drinking too much Nog. The codependency issues with Mrs. Claus and the weight problems were a whole other matter...

Project continued

first ask yourself whether the project is necessary. Is the envisioned improvement or change something that most potential home buyers would appreciate and enjoy? Will it add sufficient value and does it have the potential to add greater value than other possible improvements? Whether you are painting a room or adding a room addition, we are here to help answer those questions objectively and we do this freely for clients, their friends, and their relatives.

Restraint: This is another important and far too overlooked aspect of home improvement. Back in the days of double digit appreciation, one could be a little careless in their spending and appreciation would still cover it. Although we have always preached restraint in these projects, today, it is super important that one pays special attention to that market for their home and to set a firm budget for expenditure based on the market. If potential, competing homes have smaller bathrooms with vinyl flooring, it might not be

a good idea to put higher end stone floors in. But if you can put the stone in for a comparable amount and keep your costs down, you may just be able to help your home stand out with the nicer finishes, should you ever sell.

The next part is simple, but far too often overlooked. Set a realistic budget that is objectively reviewed by someone who has the experience to know. Then manage the project and stick to the budget. Again, we can help with this too.

Please call us about any project that you are considering!