



August 2010

GRILL WISE.

The second summer heats up so do the charcoals. To ensure your grilling stays catastrophe-free, follow these simple safety precautions.

■ Wash , Wash, Wash Your Hands (as in Row, Row, Row Your Boat)

Always, wash your hands with hot, soapy water before and after handling food.

■ Marinating Mandate

When marinating for long periods of time, it is important to keep foods refrigerated. Don't use sauce that was used to marinate raw meat or poultry on cooked food. Boil used marinade before applying to cooked food.

■ Hot, Hot, Hot

When grilling foods, preheat the coals on your grill for 20 to 30 minutes, or until the coals are lightly coated with ash.

■ Temperature Gauge

Use a meat thermometer to insure that food reaches a safe internal temperature.

■ Where's the Beef? Chicken and Fish?

Hamburgers should be cooked to 160° F, while large cuts of beef such as roasts and steaks may be cooked to 145° F for medium rare or to 160° F for medium. Cook ground poultry to 165° F and poultry parts to 170° F. Fish should be opaque and flake easily.

■ Stay Away from that Same Old Plate

When taking foods off the grill, do not put cooked food items back on the same plate that previously held raw food.

Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/grill.htm>



Beat the heat with this summer treat!

Watermelon Lemonade

Ingredients

1/2 cup white sugar
1/2 cup water
4 cups cubed watermelon
3 cups cold water
1/2 cup fresh lemon juice
6 cups ice cubes

Directions

Place the watermelon into a blender. Cover, and puree until smooth. Strain through a fine mesh sieve. Bring sugar and 1/2 cup water to a boil in a saucepan over medium-high heat until sugar dissolves, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat. Stir in 3 cups of cold water and the lemon juice. Divide the ice into 12 glasses, and scoop 2 to 3 tablespoons of watermelon puree over the ice, then top with the lemonade. Gently stir before serving.



Recipe Courtesy AllRecipes.com:

<http://allrecipes.com/Recipe/Watermelon-Lemonade-2/Detail.aspx>



What's My Home Worth?



Are you considering a move in the near future? Knowing the current value of your home will help you to set expectations about the selling process and properly price your home from the start, potentially attracting more buyers and creating a quick sale. In fact, it's been my experience that homes which were priced correctly from the start typically sell faster. Consider these factors when calculating your homes' value.

1. **Location of the home.** Take a look around at the different neighborhoods in your area. Now compare yours to them on a scale from 1 to 10. Take into account the current state of your neighborhood. What are the schools like, is yours a gated community or is it an older community, is it a development? These factors play a big part in your potential price.
2. **Determine the square footage of your home.** Calculating how much home you have will make it easy to compare your home to similar properties in your neighborhood.
3. **The age of your home.** Is your home brand new? Has it been on the block for more than 10 years? Wear and tear that comes with an older home could potentially bring down its value.
4. **Recent Home Improvements.** Home renovation, structural improvements, additions, pools or installing energy saving improvements will add significant value to your home.
5. **Recent home sales in your area** are one of the best indicators of the possible price you'll be able to glean from your home. Consult major home buying Websites such as Trulia or Zillow for recent sales in your neighborhood. Find homes that match your square footage, number of rooms, amenities and age for the most accurate snapshot of potential prices.



Remember, that while your research on your homes' value is important, I will always provide you with a free Comparative Market Analysis (CMA) and will offer exclusive expertise that may not be readily available to a seller.

No expiration date on FHA Loans



Did you miss the homebuyer tax credit? If you're worried that your dream of homeownership has come and gone, it might be worth considering an FHA loan. Whether you're a first-time homebuyer, an investor interested in purchasing an REO or a current homeowner looking to give your home a lift, an FHA Loan could be the right option for you.

First, a little background: Congress created the Federal Housing Administration in 1934 to help low-income families purchase homes. Today, the loan helps people buy homes by insuring the home loans that they purchase. FHA mortgage insurance provides lenders with protection against potential losses should the homeowner default on their mortgage loan. This means that since loans made by your bank are backed by the U.S. Government, lenders can offer lower rates because there's less risk involved.

Here are the different ways you can take advantage of the FHA loan opportunity.

1. **Low down payment requirements.** A down payment on a conventional mortgage typically starts at 10 percent of the purchase price of the home. Single-family mortgages insured by FHA under Section 203(b) make it possible to reduce down payments to as **little as 3 percent**. Closing costs which can be costly for some buyers can also be included in the loan.
2. **Energy Efficient Loans.** The Energy Efficient Mortgages Program (EEM) helps homebuyers or homeowners save money on utility bills by enabling them to finance the cost of adding energy-efficiency features to new or existing housing as part of their FHA-insured home purchase or refinancing mortgage.
3. **Purchasing Homes in Rural Areas.** This type of loan is known as the FHA Fixed Rate Loan and has similar provisions as the loan that Single Family Mortgages filed under Section 203(b).
4. **Repairing a Fixer-Upper or rebuilding after a disaster.** A program known as HUD 203(k) lets qualified buyers purchase fixer-uppers with FHA guaranteed loans, and even has built-in protection for the borrower should the repair and renovation process cost more than expected or should there be an unexpected disaster. This is a great option for home buyers interested in purchasing an REO.

If you're in the market for a home or know someone who is - an FHA might be a great option. If you're uncertain whether you qualify, give me a call or send me an email. I'd love to sit down and discuss your homeownership options.

Sources: <http://www.fhaloan.com/>; <http://hud.gov>