



*... because
your move
matters!*



Sheila Dowell

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Distinctive Homes ~

Distinctive Lifestyles

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Sheila Dowell's “Home News”

*News To Help You Save
Time, Money and Have Some Fun!*

From the Desk of Sheila Dowell ...

I have been a full time real estate broker in Texas for over 25 years. I've helped Buyers and Sellers rebuild/refurbish their homes locally when a Tropical Storm or Hurricane came through: Tropical Storm Allison, Hurricane Ike, Hurricane Harvey. The 2001 World Trade Center disaster pummeled our markets. As part of the Houston Metroplex, we in Montgomery and North Harris Counties asked ourselves each time “How will our Real Estate Market Recover? Will I lose value in my home? How long will it take until the market comes back?” This global pandemic has brought each of us to the same place: What will our real estate market look like in 3 months, 1 year or even longer? Oil is “Big Business” in our part of town, so mergers, furloughs and layoffs are to be expected and the impact on our personal market will be felt by everyone here. But real estate will still be sold. Families will still buy/still sell. The moving will slow down... not stop. All the “best real estate brains” in the State are making forecasts for the balance of 2020. Most of them agree on these points:

- Inventories will continue to be tight.
- Mortgage rates will continue to be at “record lows”.
- General home prices will decline, but not by much... I am hearing less than 10%.
- Total # of sales will decline by 25-35% by the end of the year.
- New construction will continue to offer “Great Deals”: all closing costs paid by builder PLUS a contribution of 1% decrease in interest rate for buyers using the builder’s preferred title company.

If you are selling in 2020:

Hire a real estate professional...someone with experience in markets like this. You want honest feedback, someone who is available to personally discuss YOUR home, YOUR needs, YOUR concerns. Make sure ALL the extras are included with your listing: Virtual Tours, Floorplans, Professional Staging, Professional Photography. For my listings, I bring my professional stager with me so we can assess whether your home needs staged furniture, accessories, art, other. I want your sale to be as quick and as profitable for you as possible, so I pay for the staging!

In today’s market, your home must be as close to competing with new construction as possible....no damaged flooring, scuffed up walls, broken/non-working appliances. Repaint/restain the front door. Freshen up the landscape. The Basics are important!

Price the home at today’s market price. Don’t “add a few thousand in case...”.

Many homes are selling at or near full price, but they must be move-in-ready. There are still contractors working safely in our market. Don’t skip this step!

Call me if I can help. I’ve lived here for 38 years...
I KNOW our Markets!

~ Sheila



“Master Chef-in-Training”

Michael is Sheila's husband of 30+ years. His hobbies include ballroom dancing (Still Dancing!), gourmet cooking - especially baking, and -just added- GOLF! We played golf 15 years ago (Michael, the natural athlete and Sheila... not so), so the return to this sport has been a bit slow. Fortunately, we aren't thinking of competing with this sport!

Simple recipes that can be used in different ways have become “our favorites” during the last few months. Sheila and I rarely go out to dinner, so cooking is a nightly ritual that is a MUST at our house. My favorite is repeated here today: Michael's “Dressed Up” Tomato Sauce! It can be used for a “meatless” dinner...spaghetti, ravioli, any other pasta; parmesan chicken; homemade pizza (buy the uncooked rounds, spread this on and YOUR favorite toppings). Anytime you see a recipe calling for jarred tomato/spaghetti sauce, try this instead. Another benefit: if vacuum sealed, it freezes for 3 months...bring it out as you want it!

Michael's Dressed Up Tomato Sauce!

Ingredients

- 2 T Olive Oil
- 1 large yellow onion, finely chopped
- 4 (or more to taste) cloves of fresh garlic, finely chopped
- 1 28-oz can plum tomatoes and juice, pureed in a blender
- 1 28 oz can of Crushed tomatoes
- 4 Bay leaves (Don't have any? Substitute 2 tsp Italian seasoning)
- 1.5 tsp Mrs. Dash's Extra Spicy seasoning
- 1 tsp each salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1.5 tsp basil leaves
- ¼ tsp red pepper flakes (Sheila is reminding me that this is VERY optional!)
- ½ c red wine (this substitutes for the sugar most recipes call for); for the red wine, I use a good Merlot or Pinot Noir
- Oil for searing meat and sweating onions

Directions

Heat Olive Oil in a medium saucepan. Add onions and garlic and cook until soft. Add everything else: pureed tomatoes and juice, crushed tomatoes, bay leaf, basil, red pepper flakes, wine, salt and pepper and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and let simmer for 30-40 minutes if needed quickly. I usually let mine simmer for 2-3 hours for a richer flavor!

Makes 6 cups or more. (I've actually NEVER measured how much... I just say “a lot” and I am happy about that!) ❖

Thanks to All my Clients for their Referrals!

There are SO many people to say “Thank You” to this time!

January-mid March, 2020 were HUGE months for our local real estate market. Sales were running 11% higher than the same time in 2019. Sales began to slow down the 3rd week in March and are predicted to remain slower throughout 2020.

Thanks to Rud Merriam and Shari Wood! Their home @ 3 Biscay was SOLD to a local couple. Rud and Shari did SO many beautiful updates at the beginning of 202 that they had more than 1 contract on their home. The 1st one, unfortunately, had to rescind his offer due to his buyer not being able to complete the transaction on his home.

And...Rud and Shari, again, for doing what they had originally planned to do: find a single story patio home in a 55+ Neighborhood in The Woodlands! More on this one next time!

Thanks to many others I am working with right now for Summer Sales. More details soon. I am forever grateful for your continued belief that together we can create a WIN-Win for ALL!

After 25 years of being in Full Time Real Estate Sales, I still get excited when I am asked to help someone with the biggest investment they will probably ever make!

READY-SET-PLANT-NUTURE and GROW!

With ample hours and pent-up energy, many are looking for at-home projects that lift their spirits. Blythe Yost, the co-founder and head designer for Tilly Design says “Being outdoors and building and caring for a garden is a great project that maybe you never had time for before, but you probably do now.” Her suggestion: go green and try your luck at gardening! Experts agree that now, more than ever, “plant babies” can be a positive, uplifting, and healthy addition to any distancing routine you may have. Ready, set, plant—and grow!

You will have something to nurture! When we adopt plants—or become a ‘bio-parent’ by planting seeds—we fill our time with meaning, since these buds need us! They rely on us for the right growing conditions in order to survive. Plants give us an excuse to head outside,” says Abbye Churchill, author of the garden design book *The Gardens of Eden*. Or bring the outdoors in. “Planting in any form—from window sill planters, to countertop herbs, to an outdoor space of any size—can help us feel reconnected to nature, she says. Her Tips for Success:

Find the right plant match. Much like dating, Churchill says not all plants are created for all people! Dependent on your typical lifestyle, who you share your home with, and how much energy you're willing to put into plant care, some sprouts may work for you, while others will crash and burn. Do you want herbs you can eat? Do you want your children to help? Having this information on hand when you shop around will help narrow down your choices.

Consider the space and stock you have. While Churchill says you don't need to have a ton of space to get started, having a roadmap will make setting up shop easier. “A window sill, a fire escape, a bookshelf, a few feet of earth—start small and with what you have,” she recommends.

Be mindful of light. When you're ready to make your plant purchase, take a second look at the sunlight required for the species. Most will have shady, partial shade, full sun, medium sun, and so on. This indicates how direct or indirect the sun should be shining on your plant baby. Check the specific needs of your plant to know the best location to put your new plant, whether indoors or outside.

Step away from the watering can! One of the most common mistakes rookie plant parents make is giving their plants a little too much love! In fact, when in doubt, it's better to give your babies space rather than go overboard with water and fertilizer. Most plants prefer being a bit thirsty. How can you tell? An easy way: stick your finger 2-3 inches down to access the moisture. Most plants will have dry soil at the top but saturated soil underneath. Until all of the water is gone when you poke a finger through, do not add more!

Research soil. Soil is not just dirt! It's a living, breathing and active part of the growing process. That's why high-quality soil is absolutely essential for good results, since it features billions of microorganisms that benefit plant health. “Good soil is a balanced ecosystem that works in tandem with your plant's roots. Just like your gut health affects your body's health, soil health affects your plant's health,” she notes.

Want some help? Download <https://buchanansplants.com/houston-gardening-by-month/> for great ideas on what to plant now and all year round!

Visit Tilly-Design.com for some inexpensive online design plans to help you be successful!

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MORE CHOCOLATE, ANYONE?

It looks like the health kick is here to stay, but so is the red wine, chocolate, and Oreos! As tensions continue to rise, our fear of transmission when leaving the house is matched with growing cabin fever when sheltering at home. SO- consumers are shopping to nurture the body and soul: a shopping cart balanced by health foods to protect immunity and indulgent foods to protect our sanity and emotional wellbeing!

- 4 in 10 Americans (42%) are consuming more fresh food and among them, (63%) plan on increasing or (34%) maintaining their consumption; only (3%) plan on less kale.

- And nearly 7 in 10 (66%) are eating more home-cooked meals; of them of those people-91% plan on increasing (51%) or eating the same number of home-cooked meals (40%) in the future.

- Use of foods for fortification is a trend: A quarter are drinking more orange juice (24%), and of that group (90%) either plan on increasing (51%) or drinking the same amount (39%).

- Yet (23%) are drinking more alcohol since C19, and among them (35%) say they will drink the same/more (37%); only (28%) will drink less. Also, (42%) are eating more snack foods and of that group (38%) plan on eating the same or more. Candy and soft drinks follow roughly the same pattern.

- Why is this polarized diet happening? A combination of stress and gratitude: (37%) feel overwhelmed trying to balance work at home and other needs of their family, (52%) feel grateful to be home with family, while (55%) have cabin fever.

- P.S. speaking of drinking, for your Zoom virtual happy hour try this conversation-starter: Did you know the Romans invented recycling?

Takeaway: Looking out on the remainder of the year filled with uncertainty of 'returning to normal', the one thing we can control is what we eat and how we live at home, consumers are shopping to create a sense of balance we lack in the outside world. Right now everything seems one part virtue, one part vice.



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