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The rise of "Friendsgiving"

Thanksgiving has traditionally been a day of family gatherings, but did you know that an increasing number of people are choosing to gather around a different kind of table, one filled with friends instead of, or alongside, family? Friendsgiving has evolved into a beloved holiday tradition, celebrating connections that go beyond blood ties. Here's what makes it special.

Changing lifestyles

Today, many of us live far from our families, manage blended households or simply prefer a more laid-back celebration. Friendsgiving offers a flexible and enjoyable alternative to more formal family dinners. It emphasizes relaxation and laughter over strict traditions.

What's great about Friendsgiving is that it doesn't aim to replace family gatherings. Instead, it celebrates the chosen family. It creates a welcoming space for newcomers, neighbors and anyone who might find themselves spending the holiday alone.

You should feel free to host Friendsgiving on the weekend before or after Thanksgiving, or on the holiday itself. The essence of Friendsgiving is people coming together in a spirit of connection.

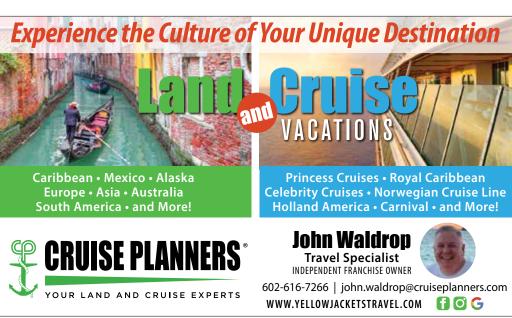
Hosting tips

- A potluck is a great way to share the cooking load. Coordinate who is bringing what, and be sure to have a system for dietary restrictions.
- Create a schedule: Plan the cooking, set the table in advance, and have drinks and appetizers ready for when guests arrive.
- Decorate with a fall or harvest theme, and don't forget a great playlist.
- Ask friends to help with specific jobs, like being the "beverage manager" or helping with cleanup.

Being a Friendsgiving guest

- Arrive on time: Don't show up late, and consider bringing a bottle of wine or other drinks as a host gift.
- Follow the host's lead on what to bring, or if it's a potluck, bring a dish that is easy to serve and transport.
- Inform your host of any dietary needs or allergies well in advance.
- Pack for departure: Bring a container to take home any leftovers.

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Here's a Tip

by JoAnn Derson

"Save plastic bags that cannot be recycled and use them to collect food scraps that cannot be composted." -- B.M. in New York

When frying ground beef, add a tablespoon or two of water. It will help the excess grease pull away from the meat, making it easier to drain off.

"To soften butter without melting it, warm a glass that is bigger than the butter stick and invert it over the butter." -- T.G. in Indiana

Save the peel from oranges and grapefruits. You can toss them on a fire for a nice smell.

"Hard water stains in the toilet are no match for denture tablets. Simply drop one in the toilet and let sit overnight. A quick scrub and a flush in the morning should do it." -- P.S. in Washington

Make a simple holiday cheese ball: Combine a package of cream cheese with a cup of finely shredded cheese (your choice) and 1/3 cup sour cream or plain Greek yogurt. Form into a ball, roll in coating of your choice (dried fruit pieces, chopped nuts, spices, etc.) and chill. Wrap in a pretty cellophane bag and bring with pita chips, crackers or pretzels as a hostess gift.

Glass and chrome will shine if you clean them with newspaper. You can mist the paper with water first, but not too much. Rub, and the shine comes right out -- plus no streaks or lint!

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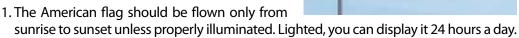
— 1 Corinthians 16:13

Unite in pride and gratitude Raise the flag in honor of Veterans Day

Every November 11, Americans take time to honor veterans for their service and sacrifice to the country. Flying the American flag represents pride, unity and patriotism. Here's an overview of how to correctly display it correctly on Veterans Day, and always.

FLAG ETIQUETTE

The United States Flag Code outlines specific flag-flying guidelines, particularly on national holidays. Follow these guidelines to honor this important symbol:



- 2. Never let the flag touch the ground and always allow it to wave freely without obstruction.
- 3. Never display the American flag beneath anything else, including state flags, on the same pole. State or institutional flags should always be positioned below the American flag.
- 4. When displaying the flag on a wall or in a window, ensure the field of stars is positioned in the top left corner as you face it.
- 5. On Veterans Day, proudly fly the flag at full mast. Remember that only on specific occasions, such as Memorial Day and Patriot Day, should the flag be flown at half-staff.
- 6. Don't use the American flag as clothing, bedding or drapery, and don't allow it to become soiled. Never mark, alter or deface the flag in any manner, and store it in a clean and dry place, ensuring it remains in good condition.

Flying our flag is a powerful way to honor our veterans.





5

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Hollywood by Tony Rizzo

In 1967, Vanessa Redgrave and Franco Nero played Guenevere and Lancelot opposite Richard Harris's King Arthur in "Camelot", sparking a love story that's unfolded over decades. When I photographed them at clubs like the Daisy and the Candy Store, their chemistry was undeniable.

That same year, Redgrave's marriage to director Tony Richardson ended when he left her for Jeanne Moreau. She and Nero had a son in 1969, but by 1971 she was with Timothy Dalton



Vanessa Redgrave and Franco Nero in "Camelot" (1967)

(who was James Bond in "The Living Daylights" and "Licence to Kill"), her partner until 1986. Eventually, she reunited with Nero, and they married on New Year's Eve 2006.

Now 88, Redgrave has finished the comedy-horror film "Cold Storage", set for February 2026 release. Nero, who also directs, stars in In the "Hand of Dante" with Oscar Isaac, Gal Gadot, Gerard Butler, John Malkovich, Al Pacino, Martin Scorsese, and Jason Momoa, which premiered at the Venice Film Festival. He's also shooting his 120th film, "Roma Elastica".

Their romance spans more than seventy years — a saga worthy of its own musical: "Came (and Went) a Lot!"



The original "Ocean's 11" (1960), which starred Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr., Peter Lawford and Angie Dickinson, received mixed reviews and barely broke even. Yet when it was remade in 2001 with George Clooney, Matt Damon, Andy Garcia, Brad Pitt and Julia Roberts, it cost \$85 million and grossed \$450.7 million.

"Ocean's Twelve" (2004) cost \$110 million and grossed \$362.9 million. "Ocean's Thirteen" (2007) cost \$85 million and grossed \$311.7 million, while "Ocean's 8" from 2018 (the ladies version), with Sandra Bullock, Cate Blanchett, Rihanna and Anne Hathaway, cost \$70 million and earned \$297.8 million.

Small wonder that Clooney announced there will be a "Ocean's 14" with Pitt, Damon, Roberts, and Don Cheadle in this sequel. Clooney's Netflix movie "Jay Kelly," with Adam Sandler, Laura Dern and Billy Crudup, drops on Nov. 14.

Little did I know when I met and photographed Clooney at his little apartment in Hollywood that he'd one day be the mega star he's become. I must have known something; I did shoot a lot of film of him!



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SENIOR NEWSLINE by Matilda Charles

Food recalls on the rise

It's impossible to say exactly what's going on, but lately there are problems with our food supply, one after the other. Listeria and salmonella are at the top of the list.

Listeria shows up in water, waste and the soil and ends up in our meat, fresh produce and dairy products.

Some say the rising number of cases of listeria are because we're eager to grab ready-to-eat foods like deli meats. Others point to better detection methods that find listeria during inspections. One big concern, however, is that cold doesn't kill listeria. Even if it's stored in the cold (or even frozen), it doesn't die.

When it comes to salmonella, expert fingers want to point to climate change because warm temperatures help salmonella grow. But there is also the problem of large farming facilities where a single sick animal can infect the rest.

But no matter the reason for the increases and their sources, we seniors need to be especially careful. A bad case of listeria or salmonella can put us in the hospital.

What can we do to avoid problems with food contamination? With salmonella, wash your fruit and vegetables. Cook foods to the correct temperature, especially eggs, meat and poultry. Invest in a thermometer to keep an eye on



the temperature in the refrigerator.

Listeria is tougher. Unfortunately, contamination can start at the location where the food is produced — and spread around the deli counter if slicers aren't washed correctly. Once we have that lunch meat at home, we need to heat it to a high enough temperature. Which means it's not safe to just grab a few slices of cold lunch meat to make a sandwich.

Besides being cautious, pay attention to food recalls. You can sign up for email alerts at www.FoodSafety.gov, www.recalls.gov, www.fda.gov and www.fsis.usda.gov.



YOUR GOOD HEALTH

by Dr. Keith Roach

Odd Globus Sensation

DEAR DR. ROACH: I was recently diagnosed with diabetes and immediately changed my diet and exercise regimen. I was able to lose 17 pounds but have started to experience a feeling of something being stuck in my throat. Could the weight loss have brought this on? I was sent to get an ultrasound on my thyroid, and it came back negative. — *V.J.*

ANSWER: A sensation of something stuck in the throat is common and can have many causes. It is referred to as a "globus" sensation. An ultrasound is a very reasonable test as a large thyroid mass (goiter) can cause a mechanical effect on the esophagus, which then leads to this sensation. Similarly, abnormalities in the esophagus, oropharynx and larynx may also lead to this sensation. Most experts recommend an evaluation with an endoscopy and a laryngoscopy for people with a persistent globus sensation.

Unintentional weight loss is a red flag in people with a globus sensation because if the cause behind the globus sensation is also leading people to lose weight, this means that it is more likely to be something serious. But this is not the case with you, so I can't think of how losing weight could have been the cause behind your globus sensation.

If the sensation of something in your throat continues, I recommend further evaluation by an ENT physician.











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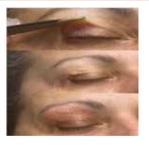


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VETERAN'S POST by Freddy Groves

Claims error rate: 61%

It's one thing to have a medical condition that neatly slots into the VA's presumptive chart of toxic exposure-related illnesses. If you served at a location at a certain time, your illness is presumed to have been caused by that service under TERA, a toxic exposure risk activity. As the list of presumptives grows (courtesy of the PACT Act), so do the number of veterans who qualify automatically. Disability benefits soon follow -- if all goes well.

But what if you were there, at a certain time, and your toxic exposure illness isn't on the list?

In 2022 when the PACT Act added so many presumptives, veterans submitted their claims, the how-to claims manual increased in size and things became complicated. For one thing, those veterans without a presumptive (listed) illness were required to get a medical exam and a medical opinion. The claims people had to do extra work and request the specific exam as well as the opinion to verify that the veteran did have that illness, and that the exposure did indeed cause that illness.

And then the problems began with the denial of claims. The VA's Office of Inspector General stepped in and conducted a very long review to investigate whether processors handled those denials correctly.

The results of that investigation showed that 61% of denials for nonpresumptive TERA-related claims had processing errors. In some cases, there was no request for a medical exam and opinion. In other cases there was no research into whether the veteran participated in a toxic exposure activity.

It's not surprising so many mistakes were made. Besides the standard 82-page how-to manual, processors needed to wade through eight policy documents, nine general information documents and 94 webpages of frequently asked questions.

The OIG's recommendations, if followed by the VA, should ease the difficulties in accurately processing the exposure claims. We can only hope they're listening.

Veterans, if you believe your illness was caused by toxic exposure, insist on a TERA exam and medical opinion to bolster your claim.



Thought for the Day

"The successful warrior is the average man, with laser-like focus."

-- Bruce Lee



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Paws Corner by Sam Mazzotta



Halloween pet safety is a paramount concern

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: Please warn your readers to keep their cats indoors on Halloween night! I've heard too many stories of cats disappearing or being injured by people with ill intentions -- especially black cats. -- Francis in Des Moines, Iowa

DEAR FRANCIS: It's a good a idea to keep cats indoors every night, but yes, they face additional threats to their safety on Halloween. The biggest danger is from cars -- traffic is heavier during peak trick-or-treating hours, around sunset. Frequent opening and closing of the front door is another danger: As owners hand out treats in the doorway, their cat may take the opportunity to run outside -- often right into the busy street.

Halloween safety extends to all the pets in the household. Cats are not likely to get into the big bowl of candy near the doorway, but dogs may be fascinated by the wrappers and lovely aromas. If owners don't keep watch, their dog may overturn the bowl and begin gobbling up chocolate or sugar-free candies that contain xylitol -- an ingredient that is poisonous to them.

pranksters harming cats (and other pets) can happen, a much more concerning fact is that many people adopt black cats for Halloween, only to abandon them afterward for one reason or another



-- they're too expensive to take care of, their apartment management doesn't allow pets, and so on. Impulsive adoptions are a bigger risk.

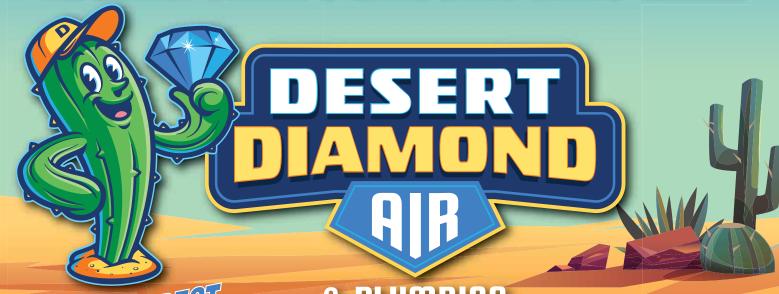
So keep your pets safe on Halloween by placing them in a separate room during the busiest part of trick-ortreating, or during a party. And make sure the candy stays out of their reach.

> Send your tips, comments or questions to ask@pawscorner.com



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Strange But True

by Lucie Winborne

One spark of static electricity can generate as much as 3,000 volts.

According to the National Turkey Federation, around 88% of Americans enjoy the bird as part of their annual holiday feast. That adds up to a belly-busting 46 million+ turkeys, says the U.S. Department of Agriculture. We don't call it Turkey Day for nothing!

Hockey pucks are frozen before each game to prevent bouncing in and out of play and other potentially dangerous and uncontrolled movements.

The phrase "United States of America" was first published anonymously in the Virginia Gazette newspaper in Williamsburg, Virginia, on April 6, 1776.

When he was a teenager, physicist Stephen Hawking's friends called him "Einstein" after they created a computer using telephone switchboards, old clock parts and additional items meant for recycling.

American school buses are yellow because the color is easier to see in poor light and bad weather.

Helium was the first chemical element not initially discovered on Earth.

Diamonds are the only gem made of a single element, at nearly 99.95% carbon, the most commonly found element on Earth.

Assembling the International Space Station took more than 200 spacewalks.

RECIPE from Stiletto Momma

Butter Chicken

INGREDIENTS

1Tbsp Olive Oil

1/4 Cup Yellow Onion (grated)

4 Garlic Cloves

2 Tbsp Grated Ginger

2 Tbsp Butter

1/4 Cup Chicken Stock

8 oz Tomato Paste

2 tsp Cinnamon

2 tsp Garam Marsala

2 tsp Cumin

1-1/2 tsp Salt

1 tsp Turmeric

3lbs Chicken (boneless, skinless, cubed)

2 Tbsp Lemon Juice

1 cup Heavy Cream

(3 cups Jasmine Rice for serving)

DIRECTIONS

In a large skillet with a tight-fitting lid, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add in onions, garlic, and ginger. Cook, stirring often, until onions are soft, and garlic and ginger are fragrant, about 2-3 minutes.

Add in butter, chicken stock, tomato paste, cinnamon, salt, cumin, garam masala and turmeric. Stir to combine and bring to a simmer over medium heat.

Stir in chicken and stir until coated. Cover and cook for 15 minutes, until chicken is cooked through.

Stir in lemon juice and heavy cream. Return to a simmer and cook until heated through, about 2 minutes.

Serve butter chicken over jasmine rice.

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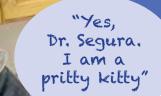
5 FISHES! ***

"Dey gibbed me the nappy juice."









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adventure	21 Installation of Gutters		N.		

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ACROSS

- 1 Dandies
- 5 Patient's need, briefly
- 8 Small town
- 12 "Yeah, right!"
- 13 Brazilian city 14 Screenwriter
- James
- 15 Buyer's offer
- 17 "Pinocchio" fish
- 18 Six, in Milan
- 19 Devoured
- 20 Dexterity
- 21 "See ya!"
- 22 Knock
- 23 Apiary homes
- 26 Business magnates
- 30 "Shake --!" ("Hurry!")
- 31 Singer Carly --Jepsen
- 32 Aussie hoppers
- 33 Lend a hand
- 35 Composer Joplin
- 36 Priestly garment
- 37 "Humbug!"

- 38 Music category 41 JFK Library
- 42 "-- the season
- 45 During
- 46 "Troy" actor
- 48 Flintstones' pet
- 49 Long. crosser 50 Skin care brand
- 51 Ollie's pal
- 52 Corp. symbols
- 53 Conference leader?

DOWN

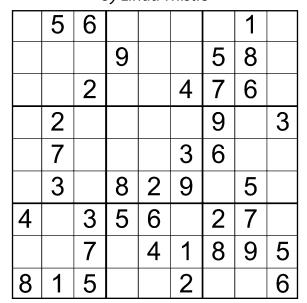
- 1 Little lies
- 2 Theater award
- 3 Mani counterpart
- 4 NASCAR
- sponsor 5 Banal
- 6 Grown-up nits
- 7 Iowa college
- 8 Rear veranda
- 9 Hybrid fruit
- 10 Stagger 11 Earth sci.
- 16 Light beams

- 20 Pouch
- 21 "Excuse me?" architect
 - 22 Deli bread
 - 23 "So there!"
 - 24 -- -de-France
 - 25 Speed (Abbr.)
 - 26 Make lace
 - 27 Tic-tac-toe win
 - 28 "-- so fast!"
 - 29 Retired jet
 - 31 Barbecue coating
 - 34 World Cup cheer
 - 35 Stated
 - 37 Pulsates
 - 38 Wanders
 - 39 Send forth
 - 40 Jazz singer Simone
 - 41 Baby carriage
 - 42 Scrabble piece
 - 43 Slanted type
 - (Abbr.) 44 Ocular woe

 - 46 Crunchy sandwich
 - 47 Soup cooker

Sudoko

by Linda Thistle



Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

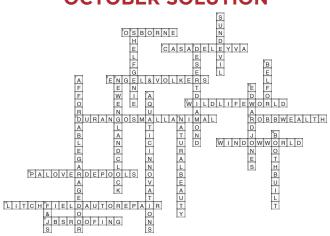
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 \star MODERATE $\star\star$ CHALLENGING $\star\star\star$ HOO BOY!

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Answers on Page 29

Dinner and A Movie OCTOBER SOLUTION



Answers on Page 29 Time to beat: 23 minutes



OCTOBER WINNERS

Grand Prize Marcelo Da Silva

GOODYEAR

WINNER **OF MOVIE PASSES**

Penny Hexdall

GOODYEAR



Friends Giving...

The Power of Giving — Together

Have you ever written a check to a charity, mailed it off, and later wondered if it really made a difference? Of course, every dollar matters — and organizations that rely on donations are truly grateful for any amount. But imagine the impact of a \$10,000 gift on a local non-profit. For most of us, that's beyond our reach... unless we do it together.

A SIMPLE IDEA WITH BIG RESULTS

Four times a year, a group of friends gathers for one powerful hour to help local non-profits fulfill their missions. Each of us contributes \$100, and together, we create a \$10,000 donation to one life-changing cause.

We are The Giving Group AZ — we listen, we vote, we give, and we leave inspired.

HOW IT WORKS

The Giving Group AZ meets quarterly — just one hour, four times a year. Each member donates \$100. With 150+ members (and growing!), the collective impact adds up fast.

Before each meeting, members can nominate their favorite local non-profit for a chance to be selected. (Eligible organizations must be at least one year old and hold a valid 501(c)(3) status.) Four are drawn at random, and their sponsoring members each give a four-minute presentation about their chosen charity. Afterward, the group votes — and the winning organization receives \$10,000. The remaining donations are divided equally among the other three finalists.

Founded in 2017, The Giving Group AZ started with just a handful of members and one simple goal: to make giving easy, impactful, and local. Since then, we've grown to more than 150 members and have donated over \$403,000 to Arizona non-profits.

WHO WE'VE HELPED

Our \$10,000 grants have made a difference for organizations like:



Families Raising Hope – assisting cancer patients and their families with financial burdens during treatment.

Compassion Alliance – providing mental health support for first responders.

Billie's Place – offering comfort and companionship to grieving children and families.

House of Refuge – breaking the cycle of homelessness in the Valley.

Care for the Caregivers – helping parents of children with disabilities avoid burnout.

Gigi's Playhouse – promoting acceptance and opportunity for individuals with Down syndrome.

Laptops 4 Learning – putting technology in the hands of financially challenged students.

Other recipients of smaller donations include Story Autism Center, R.O.S.E. (Resources/Outreach to Safeguard the Elderly), Scottsdale Desert Stages Theater, ALA West Foothills Baseball Boosters, Packages From Home, Arizona Spellers Academy, and Crowns of Courage.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Join us! We're aiming for 200 members by December 31 — and we'd love for you to be one of them. Visit **www.tggaz.org** for details about our upcoming November 20th meeting and learn how easy it is to become a member.

Join us in person for an inspiring evening — or from your sofa via Zoom — and experience how powerful giving can be when we do it together.

www.westvalleystaraz.com WEST VALLEY STAR NOVEMBER 2025 23

My face in the mirror isn't wrinkled or drawn; My house isn't dirty and the cobwebs are gone. My garden looks lovely and so does my lawn; I think I might never put my glasses back on.



Strange But True

The Great Pyramid at Giza has over 2 million stone blocks, each with an average weight of more than 2 tons.

Two days after Alexander Graham Bell died at his summer home in Nova Scotia on Aug. 2, 1922, all telephone service in the United States and Canada was suspended for a full minute at the precise moment when he was lowered into his grave.

Just 10% of an incandescent light bulb's energy produces light. The remaining 90% produces heat.

Most people think we gain 5 to 10 pounds over Thanksgiving, but you'll be glad to know the average amount is really just a single pound.



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Our media consultants and award-winning design team will create an ad that reflects YOUR image!

1. You reach THE right target audience every time

When you advertise in our local magazine, you're sure to be noticed by the potential customers that matter most to you.

It's as simple and logical as that!

4. You support the local economy

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5. You benefit from professional advice

If marketing isn't your cup of tea or you don't know where to start, don't worry!
Our dynamic and professional team is here to guide you every step of the way, giving you peace of mind.

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Celebrity Extra by Dana Jackson

Q: My husband and I just finished bingeing "Better Call Saul." We've also watched "Breaking Bad." Since there aren't any other shows in this "universe," what show would you suggest that's similar? -- G.K.

A: I would stream "Fargo," which is an FX series in a similar vein, available now on Hulu. It's an anthology series created by Noah Hawley and based very loosely on the Academy-Award-winning film of the same name. The series debuted in 2014 and is similar to "Better Call Saul" in that both are black comedies about ordinary people who find themselves committing felonies.

Each season of "Fargo" takes place in the frozen tundra but during a different year. Season one starts



Kirsten Dunst and Jesse Plemons in season two of "Fargo"

out in 2006 and centers around a meek insurance salesman named Lester played by Martin Freeman ("Sherlock"), who finds himself mixed up with a sociopathic fixer played by Billy Bob Thornton ("Landman").

Season two is set in 1979 and is arguably the best of

the installments. It stars Jesse Plemons ("Civil War") and Kirsten Dunst ("Roofman") as they attempt to cover up a hit-and-run homicide of the son of a local crime family. Its impeccable cast also includes Kieran Culkin ("Succession"), Jean Smart ("Hacks"), and Ted Danson ("A Man on the Inside"), just to name a few of the stars.

The remaining three seasons take place in 2010, 1950 and 2019. They didn't earn as much critical acclaim as the first two, but they featured noteworthy performances by Ewan McGregor ("Star Wars"), Carrie Coon ("The White Lotus"), Chris Rock ("The Trainer"), and Jon Hamm ("Landman").

 $\star\star\star$

Q: Why is Amelia being written out of "Grey's Anatomy"? She's one of my favorite characters on the show. -- D.S.

A: Caterina Scorsone has played Dr. Amelia Shepherd on two different series since 2010: "Private Practice" and "Grey's Anatomy." Her character decided to take a muchneeded sabbatical, but the actress will be back in 2026 after an eight-episode break.

"Grey's" has reduced its number of guaranteed episodes for veteran cast members as a cost-saving measure. Scorsone will only appear in 10 of 18 episodes this season. This might be the choice of the actress. The good news is that the fan-favorite will be back!





BUSINESS & SERVICE DIRECTORY

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Smoking and vaping: what are the environmental consequences?

Traditional cigarettes and e-cigarettes are known to be hazardous to your physical health, but they also pose risks for the health of the planet. Here's an overview.

RESOURCE DEPLETION

The tobacco industry uses more than 20 billion tons of water every year. Producing a single cigarette requires between three and four litres of water. Additionally, tobacco cultivation leads to the elimination of approximately 600 million trees annually.

The picture is hardly any brighter for e-cigarettes. Each device is made with a combination of materials, including lithium-ion batteries, plastic and electronic circuits. These materials rely on resource-heavy extraction and manufacturing processes.

POLLUTION

People discard billions of cigarette butts directly onto the ground every year, and just one can contaminate up to 265 gallons of water.

Improperly discarded e-cigarettes release heavy metals like lead, mercury, lithium and cadmium into the environment. Their batteries also pose fire risks at waste sorting sites and can form toxic liquids in landfills.

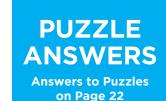


SMOKE AND VAPOR

The very habit of smoking or vaping pollutes the air. Cigarette smoke contains many air pollutants, including greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change.

The vapor emitted by electronic cigarettes contains traces of chemicals such as formaldehyde and heavy metals. Additionally, heated plastic parts release volatile organic compounds and other pollutants into the air.

Do you smoke or vape? Protect the planet by using recycling or recovery programs for cigarette butts and e-cigarette components. Don't forget to spread the word to your friends and family!



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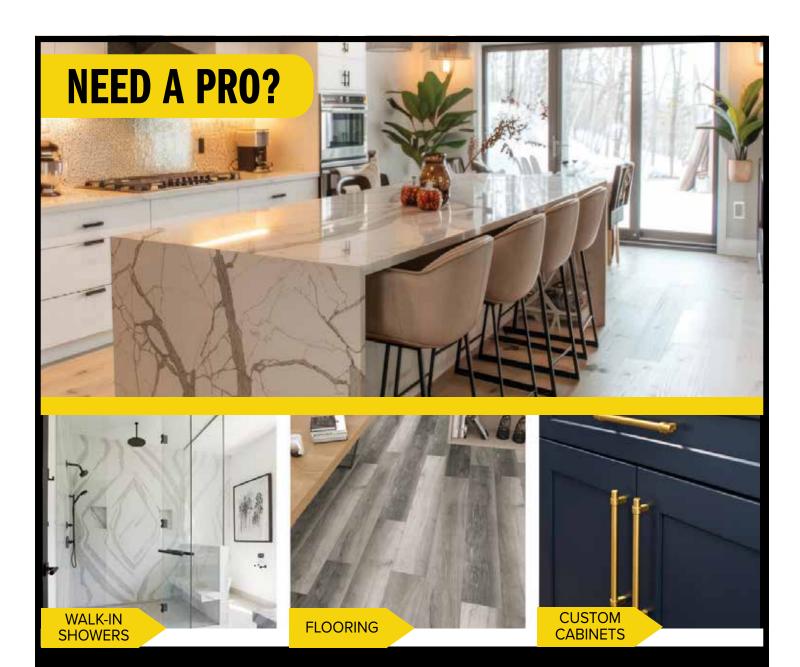
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