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Everybody's Talking

Staying fresh: Imagine buying grapes at the grocery store and being able to keep them fresh for several months. Farmers in Afghanistan employ an age-old method to do just that. It's called gangina, a technique that involves using two layers of wet soil as a container for the fruit. The soil, which is formed into the shape of a saucer, is dried in the sun, and the grapes are sealed inside. The airtight saucer is then stored in a cool place, sometimes even underground. The fresh grapes placed inside the container must not be spoiled, squashed, or broken, or the rest of the healthy grapes will spoil as well.

Tiny fruit: Coconuts, those large balls with the brown shells and the white milk and meat hidden inside, bring thoughts of warm climes and interesting cuisine. But big, familiar coconuts aren't the only variety available. A relative of the coconut is the coquito. This marble-sized fruit is also called pigmy coconut or dwarf coconut, and grows on Jubaea chilensis palm trees that are common in Chile. Unlike the fruit, these trees are huge and can live for many decades. The tiny fruit looks and tastes like its bigger counterpart, but doesn't have milk inside the shell. A coquito can be used in a variety of dishes, including desserts, snacks, and drinks.

Wild chickens: There are feral cats and there are feral dogs, but feral chickens? On the Hawaiian island of Kauai (U.S.), these wild birds do, indeed, exist. They can be found everywhere, from the beach to the street to parking lots, which is an odd sight for visitors who are accustomed to seeing chickens in chicken coops. According to the locals, these free-roaming chickens and roosters came into existence after two hurricanes in the 1980s and 1990s wrecked the coops. The homeless domestic birds then mated with other wild fowl already on the island, leading to a poultry population boom.

Water tower home: Lots of people make homes out of abandoned buildings, such as old churches or schoolhouses. But a pair of cousins from Nieuw-Lekkerland, Zuid-Holland, Netherlands, made a unique transformation. They turned an unused water tower into a home. The cousins are Sven and Lennart de Jong, who lived near the tower as children. When the tower came on the real estate market, they bought it, then spent 10 years making it into beautiful living quarters with their own hands. In the middle of the renovation, they both met and married their spouses, both of whom loved the idea. Now, the two couples and their children each have their own living spaces in their distinctive home.

Quoteable Quotes

"Common sense is not so common." —Voltaire
 "The whole secret of the study of nature lies in learning how to use one's eyes." —George Sand

What's Happening

Dec 4-Christmas Farmers Market Leduc Recreation Center, 4330 Black Gold Drive.

Dec 9 to Jan 17-Online Classes open for registration-Adults 50 plus Learn something new! Classes start January 17-something for almost every interest. Non-credit classes in sciences, humanities, arts leisure. ELLA offers education, affordable, fun, non-credit courses for adults. Register now MY_ELLA.COM.

Dec 12-Devon Christmas Arts Market Come check out our local artists, craftspeople and artisans each month at the Devon Community Center, 20 Haven Ave, Devon. The Market runs from noon to 4 pm. Free to attend

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Trivia

1. Honus Wagner was a famous basketball, soccer, or baseball star?
2. Jellyfish are 95% water—T/F?
3. Grape Nuts cereal was created by Charles Post in 1897, 1920, or 1950?
4. What is a sailor's emergency signal?
5. Orange is the combination of what two colours?

(Flip bottom of page for answers)

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Recipe of the month

Chocolate Covered Strawberry Christmas Trees

12 ounces dark green candy melts
 1 pound of strawberries, stems removed
 24 Oreos cookies
 white icing
 sprinkles
 candy stars

Icing:
 2 1/2 cups powdered sugar
 3 tablespoons heavy cream
 Add water by the teaspoon and whisk until the desired consistency is reached. You want it to be thick like toothpaste.

Prep Time: 15 min. Cook Time: 10 min. Yield: 24

- 1 Set a heat proof bowl over a small pot of simmering water on the stovetop (double boiler). Slowly melt the candy melts in the bowl, stirring occasionally. Do not allow moisture to come in contact with the candy.
- 2 Spoon or pipe a small amount of icing onto the top of each Oreo. This will adhere the strawberry to the cookie base.
- 3 Once candy melts are fully melted, turn the heat to low while you dip the strawberries using a toothpick inserted into the cut end.
- 4 Shake off excess candy coating gently. Using a second toothpick inserted into the pointed end of the dipped strawberry, carefully place the strawberry on top of the icing on the Oreo.
- 5 Decorate with sprinkles and a candy star while the candy coating is still wet. It will usually dry in about 10 minutes.

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Your Weekly Horoscope

ARIES

(March 21 - April 20)



You may have a strong drive to take a big risk to go after what you desire. It may be better to develop a strategy rather than making an impulsive move. Lucky numbers: 3, 29, 30, 43, 45, 46.

TAURUS

(April 21 - May 21)



You may feel stymied in your efforts right now. Have a discussion with those you trust on where an adjustment in your plans could give you a better result. Lucky numbers: 8, 10, 15, 22, 25, 27.

GEMINI

(May 22 - June 21)



Your usual ability to readily pick up information from your environment may be on the fritz right now. If so, you will need discernment in your judgment of upcoming situations. Lucky numbers: 4, 9, 23, 24, 37, 45.

CANCER

(June 22 - July 22)



You may be currently focused on how best to keep the home fires burning smoothly. Think through where your viewpoint may need to be changed to achieve this outcome. Lucky numbers: 1, 2, 6, 10, 40, 45.

LEO

(July 23 - Aug. 23)



You may easily communicate your ideas to others. However, don't self-identify so strongly with those ideas that you end up arguing with others. Listen to their viewpoints as well. Lucky numbers: 16, 18, 21, 23, 25, 35.

VIRGO

(Aug. 24 - Sept. 23)



You may be uncertain about what you want in a situation. If so, decide what next step is best in alignment with your heart's desire, and the uncertainty should recede. Lucky numbers: 6, 17, 20, 23, 38, 46.

LIBRA

(Sept. 24 - Oct. 23)



You may be experiencing a calm, smooth environment right now. If so, you may want to take this opportunity to expand outside of your comfort zone to do something different. Lucky numbers: 3, 6, 7, 19, 22, 27.

SCORPIO

(Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)



Your plans may not be manifesting as you hoped. If so, be careful of getting angry, which may only make matters worse. Better to wait and reassess the situation. Lucky numbers: 2, 14, 18, 19, 35, 42.

SAGITTARIUS

(Nov. 23 - Dec. 21)



This time holds a potential for achieving your deeply felt hopes and wishes. To do so, let go of any old karmic patterns and beliefs that are holding you back. Lucky numbers: 4, 7, 18, 23, 31, 43.

CAPRICORN

(Dec. 22 - Jan. 20)



A focus on your relationships may be ongoing. If so, be aware of your emotions and feelings. How are they influencing your interactions with others? What changes need to be made? Lucky numbers: 1, 10, 14, 35, 36, 46.

AQUARIUS

(Jan. 21 - Feb. 19)



Your focus may be on how to improve the lives of others. If so, you may need to wait a bit before the conflicting elements of your plan come together. Lucky numbers: 2, 6, 11, 14, 18, 48.

PISCES

(Feb. 20 - March 20)



Your energy level may be low, leaving you feeling tired. If so, think of where you can reduce your commitments so that you can lower stress and get more rest. Lucky numbers: 3, 5, 7, 25, 36, 48.

Lucky numbers this week: This week's odds favour Aries winners with the luckiest number being 3.

Did You Know...

Rock star: British rock star Rod Stewart was born in London, England, in 1945. He was involved in several bands during his youth, including the Jeff Beck Group and The Faces, before becoming a solo artist with such singles as "Maggie May" and "Tonight's the Night."

Ouchy elbow: Tennis elbow, or lateral epicondylitis, means the forearm muscles are being overused, causing damage and pain in the tendons. The condition is caused by repetitive motions, such as painting, repeatedly using a tool and, yes, playing tennis.

Lovely linen: Many people may wonder where the linen fabric in their sheets, suits, and napkins originates. This fabric comes from the flax plant. Its fibres are woven to make a durable, moisture-resistant material.

Migrating mammals: Another name for the wildebeest is the gnu. These hooved mammals live in the open plains of Africa, such as the Serengeti. They eat grasses and seasonally migrate to find food.

Tough game: While most people are familiar with 5-pin and 10-pin bowling, there is also a game called candlepin bowling. The pins in this game are tall and slender and are frustratingly hard to knock over with the small bowling balls used in the game.

On the Lighter Side

What do you get if you cross an octopus with a piece of furniture? An arm, arm, arm, arm, arm, arm, armchair.

Why did Dracula run out of the garden? He saw sunflowers coming up.

Instructor: What is the most common reason for dry skin? Medical student: Towels.

Knock! Knock! Who's there? Hiatus. Hiatus who? Hiatus lunch and now the school bully is after me.

Where did the smart cat go to school? Purr-due.

Answers

Trivia answers: 1. Baseball star 2. True 3. 1897 4. SOS 5. Red and yellow

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