



In This Issue

- Banking Crisis Update: Japan
- Gift Cards: Read the Fine Print
- Poinsettia: The Christmas Flower
- The Wine Corner: Gift Ideas
- Recipe of the Month
- A Final Word

A Note from Glen

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all readers of this newsletter for your inspiration, comments, and suggestions. This issue concludes the 3rd year of the newsletter. I hope you have gained something from reading it. I have learned a lot by doing it.

I wish you a joyous holiday season and a Happy New Year. May the memories you create during this season be lasting ones.

Fun Facts and Trivia

Galileo became totally blind just before his death.

The Olympic was the sister ship of the Titanic.

Brain Teaser

What do the following numbers have in common?

3 7 10 11 12

See page 3 for the answer.

Banking Crisis Update: News from Japan

In these uncertain times, one can never have too much information regarding the banking crisis. It has affected people all over the world and now uncertainty has hit Japan. Here is the most recent news.



In the last few weeks Origami Bank has folded, Sumo Bank has gone belly up and Bonsai Bank announced plans to cut some of its branches. Recently, it was announced that Karaoke Bank is up for sale and will likely go for a song. Shares in Kamikaze Bank were suspended after they nose-dived.

Samurai Bank is soldiering on following sharp cutbacks. Ninja Bank is reported to have taken a hit, but they remain in the black. Furthermore, 500 staff members at Karate Bank got the chop and analysts report that there is something fishy going on at Sushi Bank where it is feared that the staff there may get a raw deal.

You may have read this joke before since it circulated around the internet earlier this year. It seems that many people are stressed out about now over the holidays, wondering how they can do their Christmas shopping without breaking the bank. A little humor from time to time helps relieve some of the stress. I thought this joke was worth sharing here for a little laugh (maybe at least a smile). Happy Holidays!

Gift Cards: Read the Fine Print

According to the Federal Reserve, more than 95 per cent of Americans have either given or received gift cards, but many shoppers have complained about the fine print. Concerns have been raised about inadequate disclosure regarding fees and expiration dates. In some cases, consumers who do not use the value of the card within a short time may find that the card has expired or service fees have reduced the value. The message is: Read the fine print when you purchase or receive a gift card.

Technology Gift Ideas

Here are a couple of gift ideas for your tech savvy friends or family

Pantone® makes flash drives in 14 colors starting at \$12.99 for 1 GB with free laser engraving. (2 GB is only \$2 more) Order a few, load them with favorite pictures from the year, and give them as unique gifts. They are available in capacities up to 16 GB. The nice thing is that you can get them with or without the Pantone® logo. Get them at www.pantone.com. They are Mac and PC compatible and feature a lifetime warranty and downloadable security software.

For your friends who need a little extra light (I didn't say enlightenment), here's a brilliant idea. Give them a [Gorilla Torch](#). They can enjoy hands-free light anywhere. It has flexible arms, magnetic feet and can be attached almost anywhere. It's perfect for auto repair, camping, home improvement, or anywhere you need light.

Food for Thought

In teaching you cannot see the fruit of a day's work. It is invisible and remains so, maybe for twenty years.

- Jacques Barzun

Jacques Martin Barzun was born on November 30, 1907 in France and is still alive at 101 years of age. He was first in class of Columbia College in 1927. He obtained his Ph.D. from Columbia in 1932 and taught history there from 1928 to 1955. Over seven decades, Barzun has written and edited more than forty books touching on an unusually broad range of subjects, including science and medicine, psychiatry, art, and classical music. Some of his books, particularly *Teacher in America* and *The House of Intellect*, influenced debate about culture and education far beyond the realm of academic history.

Poinsettia: The Christmas Flower

The poinsettia is a species of flowering plant indigenous to Guatemala and Mexico. It was named for Joel Roberts Poinsett who was the first United States Minister to Mexico. He introduced the plant into the United States in 1828.



The Ecke family of Encinitas, California had a virtual monopoly on poinsettias until the 1990s due to a technological secret that made it difficult for others to compete. The Eckes' technique, involved grafting two varieties of poinsettia together, which made it possible to get every seedling to branch. This resulted in a bushier plant. It was the third generation of Eckes, Paul Ecke, Jr., that was responsible for cultivating the association between the plant and the winter holidays.

The association of the poinsettia with Christmas began in the 16th century in Mexico. Legend tells of a young girl who was too poor to provide a gift for the celebration of the birthday of Jesus. The tale goes that the child was inspired by an angel to gather weeds from the roadside and place them in front of the church altar. Crimson "blossoms" sprouted from the weeds and became beautiful poinsettias. From the 17th century, Franciscan friars in Mexico included the plants in their Christmas celebrations. Across North America, poinsettias are typical Christmas decorations in homes, churches, offices, and elsewhere. They are available in large numbers from grocery, drug, and hardware stores. In the United States, December 12 is National Poinsettia Day.

In areas outside its natural environment, poinsettias are commonly grown as indoor plants where they prefer good morning sun then shade in the hotter part of the day. As they are subtropical plants, they will likely perish if the night-time temperature falls below 50°F (10°C) so they are not suitable for planting in the ground in cooler climates.

Poinsettias require a period of uninterrupted long, dark nights for around two months in autumn in order to develop flowers. Incidental light at night during this time will hamper flower production. When watering it is important to allow them to drain out any excess water. Having a poinsettia set in water can harm the plant as it prefers moist soil to direct water.

The Wine Corner



It's that time of year again when we start thinking of a special gift for that special person. This column is dedicated to helping you with gift ideas for the wine enthusiast. I have even included links where you can purchase these gifts.

From inexpensive to probably much more than you want to spend, you can get a nice corkscrew—maybe even a personalized one. (Anyone who drinks wine needs one or more!) [WineOpeners.com](#) is an entire website devoted to them.

How about an electric wine opener? You don't have to spend a lot to get one that looks nice and works well. The [Oster Electric Wine Opener](#) is a good example. For a little bit more, you can get the [Oster Inspire](#) with a matching wine chiller.

Don't throw out those wine corks! Use them to make a unique bulletin board. This [Wine Cork Bulletin Board Kit](#) is an unusual gift. It comes with a maple frame and directions. The rest is fun for whoever you give it to!

For those who do not always drink the whole bottle (Is there someone like that?), [Bottle Stoppers](#) make a nice gift.

It seems that we always have someone on the gift list that seems to have everything. Here is an idea for such a person. It's a [Wine Chiller](#) that has 33 preset temperatures to cool or warm wines, red or white, or champagnes to the optimal degree. It has a cool blue digital display, too!

Enjoy your shopping adventure, even if you do it from your computer in the comfort of your own home!

Recipe of the Month: Gumdrop Cookies

4 eggs
2 cups light brown sugar
1 tablespoon cold water
2 cups flour
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 cup (or more) chopped pecans
1 cup chopped gumdrops, all colors (see note below)
Icing (recipe follows)

Preheat oven to 325°.

Beat eggs, add the water, and then mix in the brown sugar. Mix well. Sift flour, salt, and cinnamon. Save out a little flour to dredge nuts and gumdrops. Add flour mixture to the egg and sugar mixture and beat again. Fold in the nuts and gumdrops. Spread in well greased and floured 9 x 13 x 2-inch pan. Bake at 325° for 28-30 Minutes. Spread with icing while still warm. When cool, cut into squares or bars.

Icing for Gumdrop Cookies

3 tablespoons melted butter
2 tablespoons orange juice
1 teaspoon grated orange peel
Powdered sugar (about 2 cups or enough to make thin icing)

Note: Snipping gumdrops with kitchen shears works well. Dipping the shears periodically in flour helps prevent sticking.

A Final Word

This is the last newsletter for 2009. Thanks for reading them and thanks for your comments during the year. I hope this year has been a good one for all of you. Happy Holidays!

Until next time, remember: It is no honor to be praised by a fool.

Answer to brain teaser: The only vowel they contain when written out fully is the letter E.

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