



# Real Estate Matters

February

## Fudge Truffle Cheesecake

- 1 ½ cups vanilla wafer crumbs
  - ½ cup confectioners' sugar
  - 1/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
  - 1/3 cup butter, softened
  - 2 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips
  - 3 (8-oz.) packages cream cheese
  - 1 (14-oz.) can sweetened condensed milk
  - 4 eggs
  - 2 tsp vanilla extract
1. Preheat oven to 300 degrees F.
  2. In a large mixing bowl, mix the crushed vanilla wafers, confectioners' sugar, cocoa and butter. Press ingredients into a 9-inch springform pan.
  3. In the top of a double boiler, melt the chocolate chips, making sure they are smooth.
  4. In a large bowl, beat cream cheese until fluffy with an electric mixer. Gradually beat in the condensed milk until smooth. Mix in the melted chocolate, eggs and vanilla. Beat with an electric mixer on low speed until the ingredients are thoroughly blended. Pour the filling into the prepared crust.
  5. Bake for 55 mins. Allow to cool and refrigerate before serving.

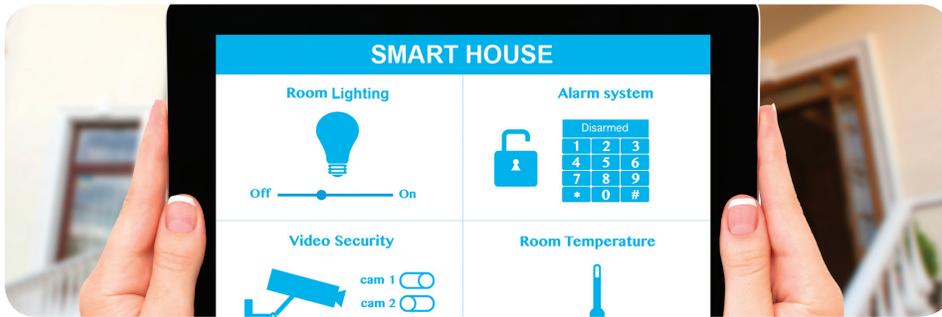
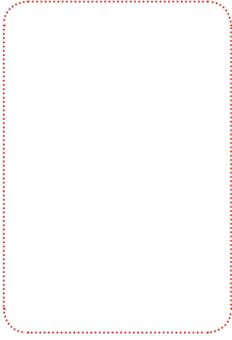


## 5 unbelievably simple DIY home fixes

Is tackling that growing list of home repairs one of your New Year's resolutions? Use these five do-it-yourself home repair tricks to start your year off on the right foot.

1. **Stop a toilet from running.** Unhook the flapper chain from the plunger arm and slide a plastic drinking straw over the chain. Cut it to size if necessary and reattach. You'll never hear that tank running again.
2. **Remove carpet dents left by furniture.** Dampen furniture dents with a wet rag, apply heat with a blow dryer and coax the fibers back into place using the lip of a spoon. Let dry and repeat as necessary until those divots are gone.
3. **Keep that cupboard door closed.** Pick up a magnetic cupboard latch; most come with screws already. Use a power drill to screw the magnet to the edge of the cupboard opening and the plate to the matching corner of the cupboard door.
4. **Get your showerhead running like new.** Mix equal parts white vinegar and water in a large plastic freezer bag and attach it to the shower pipe with a sturdy rubber band. Remove and check the flow every 20 minutes. You don't even have to remove the head!
5. **Breathe new life into old wood.** Pick up a package of wood stain markers in assorted shades and transform your door jambs, baseboards, bannisters, furniture and more. Start a shade lighter and go darker if needed and watch scratches and scrapes vanish.





## Smart house

Does your home do enough for you? Consider these upgrades to make your house smarter:

**Automated home security system** – Arm and disarm your home security system remotely from your smart device or computer. Access security cameras, keep tabs on who enters with personalized access codes and receive notifications each time the system is turned on or off — and by whom.

**Video doorbell** – With a video doorbell, you can screen or even video chat with visitors before you answer the door. When you're not home, the video doorbell can be set to take the picture of anyone who rings your doorbell when you're away.

**Automated smart lock** – From your smart device, you can check to make sure you've locked the door, allow for remote entry by guests or unlock your door as you pull up.

**Automated garage door opener** – Open and close your garage door with your smart device.

**Remote heating and AC controls** – Access your heating and AC controls from your smart device to turn on your heater or AC, and have the house comfortable when you arrive home from work or vacation.

**Smart lighting** – Set your lights to gradually illuminate in the morning. Adjust the quality of lighting to set the mood or simply configure your lighting needs to automatically turn on and off at set times.

**Remote irrigation control** – Turn the irrigation system on or off with your smart device when you're on vacation, or adjust it remotely on those unexpected rainy days.

**Automated gardening assistant** – As an extension to your remote irrigation control, an automated gardening assistant incorporates sensors in your garden that send you updates on soil humidity, air temperature, pH and more.

And if you're ready to upgrade to a new house, give me a call!

## Your February Maintenance Tip

Make painting the exterior of your home a breeze with these simple tips:

- 1. Clean it up.** Use a low pressure hose to rinse weather stains, webs and other dirt off the exterior of your home. Move outdoor furniture, vehicles or other décor out of the way before you get started.
- 2. Fix it up.** Repair any small holes or cracks in the siding where moisture tends to collect.
- 3. Scrape it up.** Tools required: 1) Paint scraper. 2) Sander. 3) Tenacity. If your house was built before 1978, the paint may contain lead. Go to [www.epa.gov/lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead) for information on how to safely remove lead paint.
- 4. Prime it up.** Treat yourself by splurging on some high-quality wood primer – it will ultimately make your job easier.
- 5. Talk it up.** If you're outsourcing your paint job, make sure you negotiate the details with your contractor. Once you've reached an agreement about liabilities, delegations and pricing, put the conversation in writing for easy reference.
- 6. Keep it simple.** Think two-tone, not Picasso. Stick with colors and designs that won't seem garish in a couple years.