

MOTHER'S DAY



PHOTO COURTESY OF METROCREATIVE

Consider these unique Mother's Day gift ideas

Mothers, stepmothers, grandmothers and many more remarkable women often work tirelessly and without fanfare to provide for their families. Even though they may deserve to be recognized throughout the year, moms enjoy a special day nestled within the month of May when children, spouses and others celebrate Mother's Day.

Many people give heartfelt gifts on Mother's Day to express their love for the mothers in their lives. The perfect gift may focus on Mom's interests and the things that make her truly happy. With that in mind, the following shopping tips can help anyone find the perfect Mother's Day gift.

Explore spa packages

What mother won't benefit from some rest and relaxation with a little pampering thrown in? Salons and massage therapists typically put together Mother's Day packages that cater to mothers. Packages may include massages, facials, hair treatments, manicures and pedicures. Gift-givers can customize the services depending on their budgets.

Dining out can be a treat

A meal at a favorite restaurant can be a welcome change from kitchen duty. Mother's Day is a busy day for restaurants, many of

which have limited menus to better handle the crowds. As a result, if dining out on Mother's Day, Mom may not get the full menu she desires. To ensure mothers have full menus at their disposal, gift givers can cook a meal at home on Mother's Day and then choose another day of the week to enjoy a meal in an upscale restaurant.

Schedule a paint and sip

A paint and sip session is a unique gift. A session is typically two hours and includes step-by-step instructions. Patrons are encouraged to bring snacks and their favorite beverages.

With the right planning, well-intentioned children can turn the evening into a "ladies night out" and encourage other moms to join in the fun. Or the entire family can paint masterpieces together.

Give tickets to a show or sporting event

Whether Mom is a sports fan or she prefers the theater or live music, event tickets can make a wonderful gift. Unique gift ideas include tickets to Cirque du Soleil, Shen Yun or a Broadway play.

Give the gift of wine tasting

Wineries can be found across the country and frequently open their doors to wine tastings and wine pairing events. A Mother's Day wine tasting can be special for the entire family and support local businesses. Check the vineyard's rules on guests. Many times those under 21 can attend but will not be permitted to consume wine, though other refreshments may be available.

Mother's Day offers the perfect opportunity to lavish attention on special women. Gifts that cater to Mom's interests will make the biggest splash.

Article courtesy of MetroCreative

MOTHER'S DAY

Show mom you care

By Emily Ryan
For MediaNews Group

Of course, mom loves flowers, phone calls, handmade cards and heartfelt hugs, but this Mother's Day, why not whip up something as sweet as she is?

"Layered trifle with fresh fruit - that's usually my go-to for her," said pastry chef Holly Haas of Frecon Farms in Boyertown. "Especially because it's May, and spring is finally here."

She arranges homemade cake, pudding and three types of berries.

"It's very rustic in how it looks," Haas described. "You can put it in a glass bowl and see the nice cake and fruit and pudding all around. And it doesn't have to be smooth like a regular decorated cake should be."

So even the youngest bakers can feel proud.

"It's something they can handle with dad helping them," she noted.

While trifle's an English tradition, Apple Tarte Tatin will have mom saying, "merci!"

"I like it because it looks really impressive, and it's really simple," said chef Jenny Young of The Red House Catering and Love in a Bowl, Soups from The Red House - a Kimberton-based delivery service.

A French friend shared the recipe, which is "always a winner," she added. "Everybody 'oohs' and 'aahs.'"

Young, also an instructor at Cooking Spotlight in Phoenixville, caramelizes apples on the stovetop, then covers the skillet with pastry, slips it in the oven and finally flips the finished tart fruit-side-up.

"Don't try to rush the caramelizing," she advised. "Give it time. Be patient. That's always my advice in the kitchen anyway."

Top it with crème fraîche as "a nice foil to the caramelized apples" and see mom smile.

Another dessert that's sure to delight: a "bright" and "pretty" fresh fruit tart.

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MOTHER'S DAY

Give the gift of going green for Mother's Day this year

Mom may appreciate chocolate or flowers. But for children who want to offer her something a little more special - especially for their eco-conscious moms - there are a number of different gift options to make Mom's big day as eco-friendly as it is enjoyable.

An eco-friendly gift for Mom is a gift that keeps on giving. When you jot down your gift idea list, think about adding these "green" gifts.

Make a basket of gardening gear

Garden plants and supplies are perhaps the greenest gifts to give Mom. Plants are so plentiful and varied

that there are bound to be ideal flowers or greenery for every mother's tastes. Compile different gardening essentials, such as seeds or seedlings, organic soil mix, mulch, all-natural compost and a few different planting containers. You can also include gardening gloves and ergonomic tools made of recycled materials. Finish the gift with the inclusion of a book that describes different garden designs and gives tips for beginners.

Dine at a local restaurant

Many families take Mom out for a meal on her special day. To make the experience eco-friendly, select among restaurants that are close to

home in the area. Explore the possibilities of restaurants that may serve foods made with local, organic ingredients. If you cannot find such a restaurant, do not worry; just choose a local establishment to conserve fuel.

Pay for a car tuneup

Improving the gas mileage on Mom's car is one gift that can be environmentally friendly. According to the United States Department of Energy, keeping a car in shape can help save money and improve fuel economy. Fixing a serious maintenance problem, such as a faulty oxygen sensor, can improve Mom's gas mileage by as much as 40 percent. Also, be sure

to have her car tires properly inflated. She can be losing gas mileage by 0.3 percent for every 1 psi drop in all four tires. Getting an oil change with the recommended grade of motor oil is another gas mileage improvement measure.

Purchase eco-friendly kitchen items

It may be a major faux pas to give Mom an appliance or a new vacuum for Mother's Day. However, if your mother is an avid cook or baker, she may appreciate some new mixing bowls or utensils made from recycled materials. If Mom is the consummate entertainer, get her new glass tumblers and sipping

straws made from recycled glass. They are perfect for serving cocktails and outdoor entertaining.

Pamper Mom with organic products

What mom doesn't enjoy a little pampering from time to time? You can treat your mother to a spa experience at home by assembling a basket full of organic shampoo, conditioner, massage oils, bath salts and any other organic spa items you can find.

Select organic fruits and flowers

Companies like organicbouquet.com can assemble a bouquet made from

responsibly grown flowers or even a wreath for a wall or door. They also have food gifts, from organic fruits to nuts.

Spend the day outdoors

Most moms cherish any gift from their children, whether lavish or simple. A nice, eco-friendly gift is to spend time together. Research local parks or hiking trails and plan a day where you both commune with nature. Or even head to the seaside for a relaxing day. Explore the landscape and be on the lookout for birds and washed up treasure from the sea. Plan to finish the day with a homemade, picnic lunch.

Welcome to My World

Honoring my mother, the farmer's wife

My mother was 43 years old when I was born. By then she had borne 10 children (the first having died in infancy) — all at home on the farm. As I grew up, I always felt Mom was closest to her father, a farmer himself, especially after finding only one photo of her and her father taken at a studio when she was

around 12 years old, the baby in a family of seven. Mom's father believed in educating his children and they became teachers. Mom refused a college education, but worked as a housekeeper after her graduation from high school.

It wasn't until I became 43 that I started asking Mom questions, the nights it was my turn, as a sibling, to help care for Pop after his stroke. Mom met Pop at a church social after he and his twin brother returned safely from WWI, Pop having received the Purple Heart. The young couple fell in love and planned to get married. This is when she told Pop, who was working in a mill, "I want to be a farmer's wife." I guess he couldn't help himself as he gazed into her sparkling blue eyes. He hired himself out on her brother, the teacher/farmer's farm, to learn the trade. And that is how my mother became the

farmer's wife. Although I was the youngest, I grew up, albeit a love/hate relationship with Mom as a teen, I did know she loved her chosen career. She took everything in stride from baking, cooking, gardening, canning, and butchering — all this in between tending to her children. And she didn't wait for Pop to come home when a horse fell through the second floor of the barn.

She got a rope and tied the feet and tried to pull the horse up, but to no avail. The horse died in a few days.

As the baby in the family, I had more material things than the older siblings, but, I probably didn't appreciate it. My sister, Anita, told me, "We didn't have much money but I never felt poor. Mom was the first to give up something so we could have more. I recall on walks to church I could see Mom's feet bleed because the shoes given to her were too tight."

I admit I appreciated Mom more as an adult and raising my own children. I know Pop had to be careful with the money, not knowing if the crops would bring in an income each year. As a kid, I considered him stingy. It was also in the 40s and 50s that some men believed they were in charge of the money. That didn't deter Mom from earning her own. She never learned to drive a car, but she did know how to "catch" the bus at the end of the

lane. She went into the city and found a job cleaning for someone. On this jaunt she'd sometimes shop for me. As a teen, I was surprised she had good taste. Yet, I wonder if I thanked her.

Mom also earned money butchering chickens and ducks and selling them. I don't know how long she saved but one summer she announced, "Pop, we're going to visit Lester (a brother) and his wife, Ruth, in Florida. I have enough money saved for both gas and a motel. I'll pack the food and water. "I think Pop was so flabbergasted that Mom could save so much, that he actually relented and they, with four of the kids, traveled to Florida.

At some point, Mom gave up cleaning houses in the city and got a job cooking for a restaurant in town. I often walked over to her work place, after school, to wait for Pop to pick us up. He always grumbled about having to leave his work.

I can't forget the boarders that rented rooms. I didn't like it at all as I had to share the upstairs bathroom with them. One time it was a man. Another time an old lady, who I think was in the early stages of memory loss, and complained daily to Mom that I stole her hairbrush.

There were also the family boarders for the festival in town. Mom loved people and many families stayed in what we called "the

old kitchen" in the back part of the house. Again we had to share a bathroom. But at this time, Pop had a toilet installed in the pantry area. Mom raised peafowl and not one of her boarders left without peacock feathers, mom's pride and joy.

Mom wasn't just friendly to boarders from the festival. She'd often have my "spur of the minute" friends come home with me after school. She never scolded, just fed them and left them sleep over. Our large farmhouse was always a party place for our church youth programs. Mom helped us make the home into a haunted place with neat ideas of her own. Other times our kitchen table held ping pong games, while French fries were our treat.

We kids didn't mind so much when Mom was good to our friends, but every Sunday, no matter who stopped to visit Mom would say, "You'll be staying for supper, won't you?" We'd cringe knowing we'd have all those extra dishes to do. Mom always did the cooking.

Another thing, us kids didn't like, was that Mom was always trying to make things look nicer outside. She was done raising chickens, on the piece of land near the house, that had the small pond. She got the idea that the area should be cleaned up for family picnics. It's not that she wasn't out there with us pulling and tugging weeds like us, we just

felt our yard was enough yard. Even across the street in front of the house was a bit of a knoll that she liked for it to look nice and grassy. Sometimes she had a goat tied to a tree to eat the high grass. She eventually got it down to her specifications and we could mow the area.

Growing up, I vowed I'd never marry a farmer. I never did. I felt farm life was nothing but work, work, and more work. And then, when I was about 25 years old, married and children, something changed. I was in a store when someone I knew came to me, "Carole, do you know your barn (Pop had sold the farm and built a new home in town by then) was hit by lighting just now and is on fire?" Since I wasn't but a few miles from the farm I drove there. The police wouldn't allow me to drive down the lane, but they did let me walk. As I headed closer, I saw the barn in flames and burst into tears. It was then and there I realized how important my farm life had been — work and all.

There is only one woman I can thank for my farm memories and that is my mother, the farmer's wife.

Carole Christman Koch grew up in Berks County and has been published in numerous publications. She has a passion for writing and has many stories from growing up on a farm to everyday stories.

MOTHER'S DAY

Tips for dining out on Mother's Day

Mother's Day is right around the corner, and this special holiday serves to honor all those women who devote so much time and effort to their families. While gifts and other trinkets are certainly part of the celebration, a vast majority of children opt to treat Mom to a night out on the town come Mother's Day. Not only does this give mom a night off from cooking, but also it presents an opportunity to get dressed up and spend time together as a family.

A vast number of families travel to their favorite restaurants for Mother's Day meals. Mother's Day is one of the busiest holidays of the year for restaurants. The National Retail Federation says 54.8 percent of

Americans treat their mothers to a special meal out on Mother's Day. Billions of dollars are generated by people eating out with their mothers. With large crowds to be expected, diners can follow a few tips when treating Mom to a meal.

Book early ... very early

To guarantee a reservation at any restaurant, namely your favorite restaurant, you will need to make a reservation well in advance of Mother's Day. It's never too early to put your name on the reservation list. Don't forget Mother's Day is Sunday, May 13.

Expect to wait

Even with a reservation, you're bound to spend some

time waiting at the restaurant. Other families may be lingering at their tables, as no one wants to rush Mom out of the door. Plan accordingly for a potentially long wait time. This means having a snack before you leave. Don't arrive famished, as no one wants the dining party to be hungry and cranky, which is not a good way to celebrate Mom. Have plenty of snacks and drinks on hand for young children, as well as activities to keep them entertained.

Consider dining out a day before or after

Restaurants are generally packed on Mother's Day, and as a result, kitchen and wait staffs might be over-

taxed. What's more, diners might be relegated to a special or abbreviated menu. If you want a more relaxed setting and the ability to order whatever you desire, it may be a better idea to celebrate Mother's Day in advance. Then have Mom enjoy a relaxing day at home on her special day.

Takeout is an option

Families can treat Mom to a dinner out, without really having to go out. Many restaurants offer takeout service, so you will not be limited to pizza or Chinese. Even chain restaurants have curbside service, so if Mom is in the mood for a burger or something more elaborate, she'll have that option.

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Mom

FROM PAGE 1

"That's one of my favorite things to do for Mother's Day," said personal chef Lynn Lampe Lindquist of Cook on Call, who teaches at Delaware County Community College and Valley Forge Flowers. "I tend to go toward fruit or citrus."

She combines lemon curd and pastry cream, topping the tart with glazed berries. "It should look like a gift. It should look like a little jewel," Lindquist explained. "It just screams happiness!"

Triple Berry Trifle

Ingredients
For cake:
2½ cups all-purpose flour

2¼ teaspoons baking powder

2 cups sugar

4 eggs

1 cup buttermilk

¾ cup vegetable oil

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 package instant vanilla pudding

1 pint fresh strawberries, sliced

½ pint fresh blueberries

½ pint fresh raspberries

Instructions

For cake: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray 9-by-13-inch pan with pan spray and set aside. In a large mixing bowl whisk together flour, baking powder and sugar together until combined. Add in eggs, buttermilk, vegetable oil and vanilla extract and mix until combined. Do not overmix the batter. Once the batter is smooth, pour into prepared baking dish. Bake for 30 to 40 minutes until golden brown or a toothpick inserted in the center of the cake comes out clean. Let cool before cutting into cubes and assembling.

To assemble: Have instant pudding made ahead of time. Try replacing milk with heavy cream to give it a lighter and creamier texture. Start by layering the bottom of an 8-by-4-inch glass bowl with half of the



PHOTO BY EMILY RYAN

Give it a twirl! Quick and easy pea pesto tops these zucchini noodles.

vanilla cake cubes. Break apart the pieces as needed to fit. Then spoon 1/3 of the pudding on top of the cake layer and spread evenly. Sprinkle half of the fresh strawberries, blueberries and raspberries over the pudding layer. Repeat using remaining cake, pudding and fruit. Top with remaining pudding and fruit. Chill and enjoy!

RECIPE COURTESY OF PASTRY CHEF HOLLY HAAS

Apple Tarte Tatin

Ingredients
5 or 6 Golden Delicious apples

Pie crust or puff pastry sufficient for a 9- to 10-inch circle

Juice of 1 lemon

¾ to 1 cup sugar

1 stick unsalted butter, plus a little more for dotting the top of the apples

About ½ cup sliced dried apricots

Instructions

Note: If your skillet has a rubber or plastic handle, wrap the handle with two layers of aluminum foil before using.

Line the base of an 8-inch heavy, preferably non-stick skillet with 1/8-inch-thick slices of unsalted but-

ter. Sprinkle liberally with sugar, about ½ cup. Peel and cut apples into quarters. (I prefer Golden Delicious for this tart.)

Place apples cut-side-up onto butter/sugar. Apples should fit together as closely as possible; it takes about 5 medium apples. Fill in any gaps with pieces of apple and sliced dried apricots, and cover the whole thing with thinly sliced apple. Squeeze a lemon over the top and place pan on medium/low heat, covered. Let it simmer undisturbed until the butter and sugar caramelizes and softens the apples. You can check by gently lifting one of the apple quarters and peeking to see when it gets golden and slightly browned. It will take about 20 minutes, but check carefully that it doesn't burn.

Roll out pie crust to a 9- to 10-inch circle. You can use puff pastry, or make your own flaky (but not puffed) pastry with 1¼ cups of flour, a stick of unsalted butter and iced water.

Remove pan from heat, dot the top of the apples with butter, place pastry circle over the top of the apples, tucking the edges down to form a thicker rim.

Be careful; it is hot! Prick the pastry all over with a fork, sprinkle with ¼ cup of sugar and place in a hot (380-degree) oven and cook until well browned.

Remove from oven. Carefully place a dinner-sized plate over the pan, and with one hand holding the pan and one hand holding down the plate, very carefully flip it over so that the tart is now on the plate with caramelized apple-side-up. You need to do this while everything is still hot or the apples will stick in the pan. (If you want to make a few hours ahead and still serve warm, you can leave everything in the pan, and reheat gently on top of the stove until the caramel melts again, then flip onto a plate as described above.) Serve at room temperature or while still slightly warm with crème fraîche.

This is also very good made with pears with the addition of some chopped almonds scattered on with the apricots. Often made in France with quince, but they are hard to find here.

It sounds complicated, but is actually very simple. This recipe was given to me by a friend in the Bordeaux region of France



PHOTO BY EMILY RYAN

Oodles of noodles: Try spiralizing sweet potato, zucchini and more.



PHOTO BY EMILY RYAN

Truffle butter, rosemary and thyme flavor this sweet potato pasta.

many years ago. He would casually make it while everyone was having a pre-dinner glass of wine. Then it was just the right temperature in time for dessert!

RECIPE COURTESY OF CHEF JENNY YOUNG

Fresh Fruit Tart

Ingredients
1 (9-inch) baked tart shell
3 ounces lemon curd
3 ounces pastry cream (a thick, creamy custard)

Assorted berries such as strawberries, raspberries, blueberries

Apple jelly

Instructions

Place tart shell on serving dish. Gently fold together the lemon curd and pastry cream. You should have no lumps. Spread mixture evenly in the tart shell.

Starting at the edge of the tart shell, place the blueberries on the cream in a circle around the tart. Next, if the strawberries are small, cut off the root end and place the strawberry, cut side down, on the cream. If they are on the larger side, cut off the root end and slice in half lengthwise. Place the cut-side-down on the cream, arranging the strawberries close together. Fill in the gaps with raspberries and blueberries. Other fruit can be used such as kiwi and mango. Glaze the fruit with apple jelly that has been melted in a saucepot over low heat. Brush the jelly on the fruit with a pastry brush.

RECIPE COURTESY OF CHEF LYNN LAMPE LINDQUIST

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MOTHER'S DAY

Five ways to commemorate Mother's Day when mom has passed away

Losing a loved one is never easy. Whether the loss is recent or not, many people find the void created by a loved one's passing never leaves them. Celebrating holidays or milestones can magnify feelings of loss, and such feelings may surface on Mother's Day among people whose mothers are deceased.

People approach Mother's Day in unique ways when their mother has been laid to rest. Such an experience is extremely personal, and there's really no right or wrong way to mark the occasion. It can be challenging scrolling through other's social media posts about happy brunches and thoughtful gifts. Some, particularly those for whom the wounds may be especially fresh, may opt to avoid the celebration or go through the motions for the benefit of children or spouses. Others may embrace the bonds they had with their mothers by reflecting on their memories.

Those opting to stay connected to their mothers this year can recognize that, although Mom may be gone, they are not motherless. While Mother's Day may be painful for people who have lost their mothers, the following are five ways to



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make the most of Mother's Day.

1. What would make her happy?

Take a heartfelt moment to really think about what made Mom tick and brought joy to her life. Was it pouring over recipes in the kitchen? Did mom like to trek to the top of a mountain in her hiking shoes? Pay homage to her by walking in her footsteps and you may just feel a deeper connection.

2. Get together with siblings

If you are lucky enough to have siblings, you can share the day together. This way you can remember the happy times, comfort each other and laugh together.

If you don't have siblings, consider a visit with an aunt or uncle or another close relative who may be feeling the loss, too.

3. Relay fond stories to others

Celebrate Mother's Day by doing things to ensure Mom's spirit and personality live on. Bring up fond stories of Mom with your spouse, friends or your own children. Help blur out the sadness of the loss by focusing on happy memories, such as those depicted in family photos.

4. Put mom front and center

Take out a beautiful photograph of your mother and display it in a prime location in the house. This way you may feel

like she is sharing the day with you, and you can think about her fondly each time you see the photo.

5. Enjoy your favorite childhood meal

Whether Mom was a master chef or couldn't boil water, there's bound to be a meal you associate with her. If that special meal is Chinese takeout or a slow-cooked roast, enjoy it on Mother's Day in her honor.

Coping with loss on Mother's Day is seldom easy. With time and by focusing on the positive, people who have lost their mothers can enjoy Mother's Day.

Article courtesy of MetroCreative

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LOCAL BUSINESS

8 things to know before hiring a contractor

Your home is your most important financial investment. When it's time to perform repairs, add on or remodel, you deserve to know that the people and businesses doing the work can be trusted. There is perhaps little else that can throw a wrench into your life's progress, completely disrupt your home and family and decimate your finances like home improvement fraud.

The good news is it is easily avoided by taking the time to follow these simple steps before hiring a home improvement contractor.

Always Get Three Bids

Generally, consumers make a big mistake on both ends of this spectrum: failing to get more than one bid or getting far too many bids.

A tried and tested method is to solicit at least three bids. Doing so gives you the idea of the general price range of the project and also enables you to quickly identify those who may be way off of the mark on either the high side or the low side.

Don't ever rely solely on price for a project. Use the price as one consideration in the process. Ultimately, you need to select your contractor based on other factors, including presentation, communication, professionalism, flexibility and their willingness to provide credentials and references.

You are going to be interacting with this contractor and their crew a great deal over the course of your project. Having a respectful, punctual and clean contractor who communicates well is just as important as the price that you pay — especially when they're practically living with you during a large-scale project.

The goal in taking the time to get three estimates is to end up with a high-quality project completed in a substantial workmanlike manner at a fair price. That's a return well worth your time invested.

Price vs. Value

One of American business magnate Warren Buf-

fett's most famous quotes is: "Price is what you pay; value is what you get."

Don't ever base the decision of awarding a home improvement project to a contractor solely on price. The ultimate value of the outcome of the project is what you will be living with (literally and emotionally) for a very long time.

Perhaps prominent social thinker and philanthropist John Ruskin put it best in the 1800s: "Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of intelligent effort."

"It's unwise to pay too much, but it's worse to pay too little. When you pay too much, you lose a little money — that's all. When you pay too little, you sometimes lose everything, because the thing you bought was incapable of doing the thing it was bought to do.

"The common law of business balance prohibits paying a little and getting a lot — it can't be done. If you deal with the lowest bidder, it is well to add something for the risk you run, and if you do that,

you will have enough to pay for something better."

Know the Quality of Materials Being Used

Ask your potential contractor where they will be purchasing the materials. Check the reputation of the supplier(s) and the brand of materials.

Quality-conscious contractors will not stake their reputation on the installation of inferior products that are not backed by the manufacturer and by the supplier. These products may cost a bit more but ultimately will deliver a higher-quality result and longer-lasting satisfaction.

Visit the supplier showrooms — if possible — to view the materials on display. Take the time to talk to an experienced sales person and learn about the item(s).

Spend Local

Local, independent suppliers and contractors alike, live and work in the same communities as you. The money they earn is reinvested back

into those communities, local governments, parks, schools and emergency services that benefits all involved.

Avoid large national contractor and supplier conglomerates who seldom have your best interests at heart, use workers from well outside of your region, can be very difficult to deal with, often lack accountability and do not reinvest in sustaining the local economies.

Verify Licensing and Insurance

In the state of Pennsylvania (and multiple other states), all contractors must be licensed with the state Attorney General's Office.

While having this registration is not an endorsement as to the quality of workmanship, not having it is a high-flying red flag. If a contractor is not registered with the state, grab your wallet, and walk away quickly!

To verify the registration of a home improvement contractor in Pennsylvania, go to the Registered Contractors

section of the attorney general's website. All contractors must display their official registration number on all contracts, estimates, proposals and advertisements.

You should also check for documented complaints with the Better Business Bureau.

Get References and Call Them (customers and suppliers)

Always ask your contractor for references. This includes, of course, references of recent customers for whom the contractor has completed like projects.

But also ask for references from the contractor's supplier(s) that they will be using for your project. Call them or stop in and have a brief conversation to get a feel for each individual's perception of the contractor in general, as well as details of project flow, cleanliness, communication and punctuality.

The people who sweat the small details (i.e. how clean they keep their trucks and tools, being punctual, leaving the jobsite clean at day's end and how they and their crew present themselves) will most often care more about the big details (like the outcome of your project).

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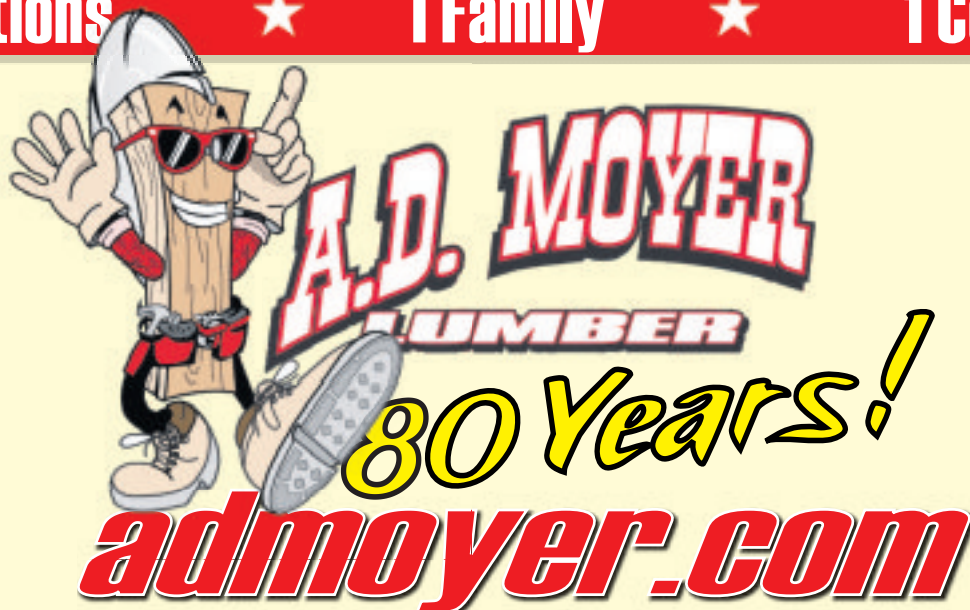


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