

# Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 05 Issue 21 Wednesday, December 21, 2011

## Preparing Your Home for Winter Weather

By Sophie Braccini, Cathy Dausman and Cathy Tyson



Sales Associate Alex Villa with furnace filters in Moraga Hardware.

Photo C. Tyson

The holidays are a time for celebration and fun – nobody wants to see them disrupted by a failing furnace or a bursting pipe. Finding a chimney-sweep on Christmas Eve when the house smells like smoke, instead of Noble fir, sugar cookies and hot cocoa, may not be an easy task. So as you organize those family activities,

don't forget your home and garden—with a little attention ahead of time, being home for the holidays will be festive, not frustrating.

So it's winter solstice. It's not too late to get your house ready for the cold and wet that's still ahead of us. You, of course, cleaned out your gutters weeks ago, right? If not, get that ladder up there



Mayor Days Be Merry! By Susie Iventosch ...read on page D4

fast; and it's a good idea to clear the roof as well. According to contractor Daniel Leleu, of Lamorinda Construction and Consulting, leaves and debris left on the roof can create slippery deposits that will damage your shingles and can be treacherous if you have to walk on the roof. If decomposition has already started, you might have to use a pressure hose to get rid of it.

With our recent spell of freezing temperatures, chances are that if trouble were going to happen, it already has. It's best to insulate exposed pipes with form-fitting neoprene foam or insulating wrap and tape, all available at your local hardware store. Don't forget the above-ground sprinkler system that is often made of plastic. If it cracks, your garden may flood.

Always cover vulnerable trees and bushes if a freeze is predicted, and check the weather-stripping around doors and windows that help keep your home warm and dry.

Also water-related – make sure that the drainage system around the house is still efficient. Especially in an older home, the underground drainpipes can rot, become damaged by roots that grow through the pipe and end up blocking the passage of water. According to Leleu, the best way to make sure that the drainage is working is to go under the house and check for moisture, especially after a rain. If that crawlspace is seriously wet, it's time to seek professional services.

S.Braccini

...continued on page D6

# Happy Holidays & Happy New Year



2011 was a great year for me, with caring and loving friends and family, loyal clients, and all while being able to live in wonderful Lafayette.

Best wishes to all for a healthy and prosperous 2012!



## Dick Holt

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## Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	1	\$325,000	\$325,000
MORAGA	5	\$270,000	\$878,500
ORINDA	4	\$765,000	\$1,635,000

Home sales are compiled by Cal REsource, an Oakland real estate information company. Sale prices are computed from the county transfer tax information shown on the deeds that record at close of escrow and are published five to eight weeks after such recording. This information is obtained from public county records and is provided to us by California REsource. Neither Cal REsource nor this publication are liable for errors or omissions.

### LAFAYETTE

3276 Marlene Drive, \$325,000, 3 Bdrms, 1160 SqFt, 1972 YrBl, 11-16-11;  
Previous Sale: \$505,000, 07-20-06

### MORAGA

1952 Ascot Drive, \$299,000, 2 Bdrms, 1234 SqFt, 1972 YrBl, 11-16-11;  
Previous Sale: \$315,000, 06-09-08

875 Camino Ricardo, \$878,500, 4 Bdrms, 2160 SqFt, 1967 YrBl, 11-9-11;  
Previous Sale: \$719,000, 03-01-01

527 Chalda Way, \$270,000, 2 Bdrms, 1114 SqFt, 1974 YrBl, 11-10-11;  
Previous Sale: \$359,000, 12-22-03

1843 St. Andrews Drive, \$830,000, 3 Bdrms, 3424 SqFt, 1982 YrBl, 11-18-11  
312 Tharp Drive, \$640,000, 3 Bdrms, 1857 SqFt, 1965 YrBl, 11-10-11

### ORINDA

11 Arroyo Drive, \$765,000, 3 Bdrms, 1588 SqFt, 1955 YrBl, 11-22-11;  
Previous Sale: \$224,000, 01-23-87

2215 Manzanita Drive, \$774,500, 11-18-11

361 Tahos Road, \$1,358,000, 6 Bdrms, 4774 SqFt, 1962 YrBl, 11-15-11;  
Previous Sale: \$1,255,000, 02-23-01

20 Wood Acres Court, \$1,635,000, 4 Bdrms, 3812 SqFt, 1987 YrBl, 11-15-11;  
Previous Sale: \$1,697,500, 06-17-04

## Lamorinda Foreclosures recorded

### LAFAYETTE

Donegal Way, 94549, RRS Ventures, 11-09-11, \$377,775, 1548 sf, 3 bd

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# Year in Review

by Andi Peterson Brown

It's no surprise that this year's local real estate market was affected by both national and global economic uncertainty. But all in all, how did we do?

## Trending this past year:

**The Springtime Surge.** The 2011 Lamorinda market was in like a lion, out like a...mouse. Attracted by historic affordability, buyers came in droves this past spring. Compared to 2010, we experienced a 13% increase in sales volume during the first half of year. But come August, the market pulled back due to (you guessed it) economic uncertainty, and we are ending the year with near identical sales volume to 2010.

**Low Inventory.** "Is that it?" a client asked me in June as we were out touring homes. Across the board, Lamorinda inventory was down about 15%. For various reasons, many move-up buyers decided to stay put and the market felt their absence. And the springtime surge, coupled with the tight inventory, meant homes that were priced accurately and showed well sold within a matter of days and oftentimes with multiple offers. Many buyers were surprised to experience that level of competition.

**Mid-Year Price Adjustment.** After the market's stellar springtime performance, pricing adjusted down about 5%. And that's not that bad, all things considered. We seem to be bouncing along the bottom of the market, and I am hopeful that we will bounce back up a bit next spring.

And as we gear up for next year, it's important to remember that regardless of what the national news says, there are still many opportunities in Lamorinda for smart buyers and smart sellers. And if you just read this column, you're already smarter.



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# Merry Christmas!



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## WINTER TIPS

Cleaning and thinning your trees may reduce the potential storm hazards without compromising the shade. In some situations the risk of failure cannot be reduced without removal of branches. Remember that healthy structurally sound trees are generally wind fast even when mature.

Storm damage is usually, but not always, related to structural problems that could have been addressed with proper structural training when the tree was young. Co dominant (two trunks with a narrow angle of attachment) trunks account for many trees failures. The hazard of wind damage is higher on the regrowth of trees that have been "topped".

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# Mayor Days Be Merry!

By Susie Iventosch



Karen Mendonca and Victoria Smith

Photo Doug Kohen

It's that cheery time of year when kitchens are bursting with the wonderful aroma of holiday baking! Cookies and candies, jams and breads, roasts and rubs and all the trimmings are being prepared for family gatherings, holiday teas, cocktail parties and Santa's trek back up the chimney! We thought it would be fun to take a peek at what our 2011 mayors have in store for the Christmastime food and festivities.

Orinda's Mayor Victoria Smith shared a few of her family's fun holiday traditions as well as her recipes for scrumptious zucchini nut bread and her sons' fabulous fudge. Mayor Karen Mendonca of Moraga offered two delicious recipes, and a little insight into her Christmas festivities. Unfortunately, we could not collect any recipes from Lafayette Mayor Carl Anduri due to his heavy travel schedule, however his traditional Swedish Christmas Eve fare sounded very intriguing indeed!

For Mendonca, Christmas has always been the time of the year when her family reunites with loved ones they don't get to see every day.

"Traditionally, we attend vigil services early in the evening on Christmas Eve, and then return to open presents and enjoy a nice dinner with the immediate family," the mayor said. "Then, on Christmas Day, we enjoy a large breakfast of omelets, fresh fruit and 'potica,' an Austrian yeast bread."

Then the formalities begin of setting the Christmas table, preparing the meal and welcoming family and friends for the holiday feast.

Smith and her family always make time to attend a concert, play or other holiday event together, so as to enjoy the festive spirit of the month.

"And, we always read 'The Night Before Christmas' every Christmas Eve!" she said.

It has always been important to her family to give back during the holidays. When the mayor's own sons, Will and Daniel, were young Scouts they worked at the Food Bank or the Books for Barrios program. More recently, Smith and her husband, Wick, have donated gifts for the Juvenile Hall Auxiliary.

"This helps to provide some small gifts (and good cheer) to young people in juvenile hall, many of whom don't receive any other gifts," she pointed out.

"Enjoy your families and your time together this year," said Smith. "And, during these tough economic times, if you can, please contribute with your time, or financially, to those who may not be as fortunate this holiday season. Happy holidays, Lamorinda!"

## Mayor Mendonca's Steamed Persimmon Pudding with Lemon Sauce

### Persimmon Pudding

#### INGREDIENTS

2 eggs  
 1¼ cups granulated sugar  
 1¼ cups sieved persimmon pulp  
 (about 3-4 large, ripe persimmons)  
 ¼ cup melted butter  
 1½ cups sifted all-purpose flour  
 1½ teaspoons baking powder  
 ½ teaspoon salt  
 ½ teaspoon cinnamon  
 ¾ cup milk  
 1 cup seedless raisins  
 ½ cup chopped pecans  
 ¼ cup brandy

For Garnish: 1 cup heavy cream, whipped and flavored with powdered sugar and pure vanilla extract



Photo Susie Iventosch

#### DIRECTIONS

In a large bowl beat eggs until light and foamy, then beat in sugar until smooth and lemon-colored. Combine persimmon pulp and melted butter and stir into egg mixture. Sift dry ingredients and stir into egg mixture alternately with milk, beating well after each addition.

Add raisins, pecans and brandy. Transfer to a well-buttered mold (I used a soufflé dish) and cover tightly with foil.

To cook the pudding, place the mold (soufflé dish) on a rack in a large deep kettle and add water to come halfway up the sides of the mold. Bring water to a gentle boil, cover pan, lower heat, and continue to cook (steam) for about 2½ hours.

Remove pudding from water and let cool for 15 minutes. Unmold onto a serving plate. Serve warm with lemon sauce and a very generous dollop of whipped cream.

#### Lemon Sauce

1 cup sugar  
 2 cups water  
 2½ tablespoons corn starch  
 ½ cup fresh squeezed lemon juice  
 1 tablespoon grated lemon zest  
 2 tablespoons butter

Combine sugar and cornstarch in a saucepan and gradually add water, blending with a whisk until smooth. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until mixture becomes thick and clear. Remove from heat and stir in lemon juice, zest and butter. Stir until well-blended. Serve warm or chilled over persimmon pudding.

Susie Iventosch is the author of Tax Bites and Tasty Morsels, which can be found at Across the Way in Moraga, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), and [www.taxbites.net](http://www.taxbites.net). Susie can be reached at [suziventosch@gmail.com](mailto:suziventosch@gmail.com).

**These recipe is available on our web site**

[www.lamorindaweekly.com](http://www.lamorindaweekly.com)

If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at 925-377-0977.



## Will and Daniel's Fabulous Fudge

### INGREDIENTS

3 cups sugar  
 ¾ cup margarine or butter (1½ sticks)  
 5 oz. evaporated milk (one small can)  
 12 squares of semi-sweet chocolate, chopped into small pieces  
 7 oz. jar marshmallow cream  
 1¼ cup chopped walnuts  
 1 teaspoon vanilla

### DIRECTIONS

Bring margarine (or butter), sugar and evaporated milk to a full boil on medium heat, stirring constantly. Boil for 4 minutes, continuing to stir constantly. Remove from heat, add semi-sweet chocolate and marshmallow cream and stir until melted. Stir in nuts and vanilla. Pour into 9-inch square pan lined with foil. Let cool and cut into squares. Makes 3 pounds.



Photo Susie Iventosch

## Mayor Smith's Zucchini Nut Bread

### INGREDIENTS



Photo Susie Iventosch

2 cups grated zucchini (I squeezed the liquid out using a dry towel)  
 1 cup salad oil  
 3 cups sugar (I used 1 cup brown and 2 cups granulated sugar)  
 1 cup chopped walnuts  
 3 eggs  
 1 teaspoon salt  
 ¼ teaspoon baking powder  
 1 teaspoon baking soda  
 3 teaspoons cinnamon  
 3 cups flour  
 1 tablespoon vanilla extract

### DIRECTIONS

Beat the eggs; add oil, sugar, vanilla and zucchini. Add the remaining ingredients and mix well. Pour into two greased and floured loaf pans. Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour.

## Mayor Mendonca's Stuffed Roast Loin of Pork

(Note- the photo shows a much smaller version of the crown pork roast. You will need about 13 ribs in order to make the full circle crown.)

### INGREDIENTS

One 6-pound pork loin roast (have butcher saw through the backbone of the pork loin between chops)  
 2 teaspoons salt  
 ½ teaspoon pepper  
 1 recipe Cranberry-Apricot Stuffing (below)  
 1 cup beef broth  
 2 tablespoons cider vinegar  
 1 tablespoon cornstarch  
 Reserved apricot liquid from stuffing



Photo Susie Iventosch

### DIRECTIONS

Trim excess fat from pork roast and cut down about 2 inches between ribs to partially separate roast into chop to make it easier to form the "crown".

Rub meat with salt and pepper and place in a roasting pan, rib bones down. Roast at 350° for about 1½ hours.

Remove pork from oven and let stand until cool enough to handle. Forcing ribs apart, push a generous amount of stuffing into the cuts between ribs. Mound stuffing slightly above the meat. Return meat to oven and roast 30-45 minutes longer, or until a meat thermometer registers 170° F.

Remove meat to a serving platter and let stand 20 minutes before carving. Drain excess fat from roasting pan. Add broth and vinegar to brown bits from the bottom of the pan. Mix cornstarch with reserved apricot liquid and stir into pan drippings and broth, simmering until thickened, then strain.

To serve: cut roast between ribs to separate into chops. Serve each chop with some of the stuffing and sauce.

## Cranberry-Apricot Stuffing

### INGREDIENTS

1 cup dried apricots, cut into small pieces  
 1¼ cup water  
 ¼ granulated sugar  
 1 cup fresh or frozen cranberries  
 ½ pound pork sausage  
 1 medium yellow onion, chopped  
 2 cups corn bread crumbs or pieces  
 Salt and pepper, to taste  
 1 teaspoon dried sage

### DIRECTIONS

In a small bowl, combine apricots with 1 cup of the water. Allow to sit for about 15 minutes. Combine the remaining ¼ cup water with sugar in a small saucepan and bring to a boil, stirring to dissolve sugar. Add cranberries to syrup and boil for about 2 minutes. Remove from heat and let cranberries cool in the syrup.

In a frying pan, brown sausage with onion, breaking up sausage with a fork. Drain drippings, leaving about 4 tablespoons in the pan. Drain cranberries and apricots. Reserve liquid from apricots and set aside. Add fruit and corn bread crumbs/cubes to sausage. Toss to mix well and season to taste with salt, pepper and sage.

# Preparing Your Home for Winter Weather

... continued from page D1

## Sweeping Changes for your Chimney

While winter nights may conjure up chestnuts roasting on an open fire, it might also be a good time to have your chimney cleaned and inspected. Whether your house has a masonry chimney, a pre-fabricated chimney, an insert or a wood stove, they all need cleaning, says Sal Russo of Russo's Chimney Sweep. The National Fire Protection Association recommends an annual inspection. Russo suggests chimneys should be cleaned after burning through a cord and a half of wood or after using 30 manufactured logs. He says the hotter the fire, the cleaner the flue, and oak or almond wood burns cleanest of all. When using manufactured fireplace fuel, a chemical free variety prevents buildup and chemical odors. Santa should note that cleaning is done from the roof down if it's a masonry fireplace, and from the inside up the flue if the fireplace is pre-fabri-

cated. Gas log fireplaces, too, need an inspection, although the frequency varies with use. If a gas fireplace is used only sparingly, an inspection every 10 years or so is adequate. Frequent, near-daily use of a gas fireplace calls for more frequent inspections to avoid the buildup of carbon monoxide and soot. Take care of the damper as well, to prevent carbon monoxide buildup in the home. A fireplace should be inspected only after a cleaning. There are no chimney sweep services within Lamorinda, but the online Prime Buyers Report, (<http://www.primebuyersreport.org/ca/walnut-creek-chimney-fireplace.html>) offers a list of "Top 10 Chimney Cleaning Services in Contra Costa County." The Chimney Safety Institute of America (<http://www.csia.org/HomeownerResources/ChimneySafetyInfo/ChimneyInspections/tabid/116/Default.aspx>) has a list of certified chimney sweeps in the outlying area.

*C.Dausman*

## It's Time to Clear the Air

Winter even in our little corner of paradise means the furnace is on. Most residents aren't losing sleep worrying about the last time the furnace filter was changed, but perhaps after all the holiday hubbub, it's worth a few minutes to check it out. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the air inside your home can be twice as bad, or worse, as the air outdoors. Nobody likes houseguests that stay too long; same with dust, pollen, mold spores and pet dander.

Filter manufacturers recommend for maximum effectiveness changing filters every three months, however more frequent changes should be considered if you have dirty ducts, construction work in progress, furniture and drywall sanding in progress, pets or smokers in the house.

Bill Snider, the owner and operator of Moraga Hardware, recommends for those who have the air conditioning on in the summertime changing the filter every three months. He says six months is generally the norm for those families without central air conditioning. "You want electrostatic filters – they're the best kind," said Snider, he's such a believer that he's discontinuing the older non-electrostatic versions in the store. Electrostatically charged means the filter fibers are both positively and negatively charged. Particulates in the air passing through the filter are also positively or negatively charged. The charge helps pull more particles from the air.

Filters come in various sizes, depending on the type of furnace, and in differing performance ratings. Higher ratings are better for folks with allergies and help keep your home much cleaner, according to Snider.

Performance levels vary from 300 MPR – Microparticle Performance Rating that helps reduce dust, pollen, mold and pet dander to 700, 800, and 1000 for the middle of the road models up to 1200, 1500, and 1900 for the best performance. The easiest way to change your filter is to bring your old one in to the hardware store to match the size exactly.

*C.Tyson*



Up on the rooftop: Sal Russo of Russo's Chimney Sweep

Photo Cathy Dausman

# Lamorinda Weekly

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more dwellings. Bring your horses and enjoy the breath-taking trails that sur-  
round the area. Prices ranging from \$199,000 to \$2,500,000. Some have poten-  
tial for subdividing. When it comes to vacant land, keep in mind what investors  
say - "they aren't making any more."

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**ORINDA**

**345 Camino Sobrante**  
Updated 4bd/3ba, 3301 sf contemp on .55 ac in primo country club loc w/spacious guest rm, updated kitchen, hded flrs, lower lvl apt w/pvt entrance, ofc, lg master suite, lawn/play area.

**Offered at \$998,000**



**ORINDA**

**20 Monterey Terrace**  
Architectural Digest worthy 5000+ sf showplace w/stunning kitchen, fab master suite, 2 FR's + sep apt. Exclusive close-in cul de sac. Beaut pvt 3/4 ac w/lovely views, lvl garden, play space.

**Offered at \$1,899,000**



**MORAGA**

**2145 Donald Drive #3**  
Street level end unit condo located just a short walk from Rheem. Spacious living rm w/frplc, 2 lg bdrms, bright eat-in kitchen, remod bathroom. New carpet, flooring and paint.

**Offered at \$229,000**



**MORAGA**

**675 Carroll Drive**  
Walking distance to town, schools, trails, parks & more. Pvt .31 acre lot w/attractive landscaping, grass play area, veggie gardens. 3bd/2ba updated throughout.

**Offered at \$699,000**



**MORAGA**

**3 Whiting Court**  
Beautiful 1-story 4bd/3.5ba trad on lvl .30 ac cul de sac lot in Sonsara. Spacious kitchen/fam rm, LR & DR, interior courtyard w/frplc, salt-water pool w/jet feature & spa.

**Offered at \$1,250,000**



**LAFAYETTE**

**945 Mountain View Drive**  
Charm abounds in this 867 sf cutie on .20 ac lvl lot nr all Lafayette Village conveniences. 1bd/1ba with exceptional curb appeal. Attn to detail thruout, Fr drs to gardens & decks.

**Offered at \$480,000**



**LAFAYETTE**

**3398 Ridge Road**  
Special Lafayette Trail 4bd/3ba home nestled among oaks w/views of hills on .29 acre. Easy walk to downtown, shopping, restaurants & 9 yrs. of schools. Backs to bike trail.

**Offered at \$869,000**



**LAFAYETTE**

**3286 Sweet Drive**  
Lovely 3150 sf home, flex floor plan, updated thruout, granite kitchen. Sweeping views, 2 master bdrms, plus 2 more bdrms & 4 baths in Burton Valley. Guest set-up w/sep entry.

**Offered at \$890,000**



**LAFAYETTE**

**1730 Toyon Road**  
Charming Craftsman-styl 2100 sf home on secluded 3/4 acre. Newer roof, skylights, furnace - gorgeous huge new decks. Maple floors, Wolfe range, very private and secluded.

**Offered at \$925,000**



**LAFAYETTE**

**2950 Windtree Court**  
A treat for the Holidays! Come see this charming remodeled traditional home w/gorgeous light-filled kitchen opening up to magical flat backyard!  
[www.2950WindtreeCt.com](http://www.2950WindtreeCt.com)

**Offered at \$990,000**



**LAFAYETTE**

**1847 Reliez Valley Road**  
Newly renovated w/high style & fully updated amenities & quality features. Lg new Chef's kitchen w/adj family rm & formal liv/din rms. Stylish master suite. Lots of bedrooms, new baths.

**Offered at \$1,095,000**



**LAFAYETTE**

**1258 Panorama**  
Totally charming trad ranch hm on most coveted street in Lafayette! Quiet cul de sac 1 blk to Happy Valley Elem. Updated thruout w/vaulted ceiling, granite kitchen & baths. Lvl lawns.

**Offered at \$1,189,000**



**LAFAYETTE**

**8 Hawks Hill Court**  
Absolutely stunning pano views of Mt. Diablo, hills & Carquinez straits. Custom blt in 2006 w/master suite, LR/DR/FR/kitchen on main lvl, 3 more bdrms & 2nd fam rm downstairs. Wine rm too!

**Offered at \$1,458,000**



**LAFAYETTE**

**4145 Canyon Road**  
Exquisite Happy Valley estate - truly one-of-a-kind property with forever views on approximately 2 acres.  
[www.4145CanyonRd.com](http://www.4145CanyonRd.com)

**Offered at \$2,950,000**



**LAFAYETTE**

**3829 Happy Valley Road**  
Rare oppy. to own 2.33 ac lvl estate in Happy Valley! Pvt gated property w/tennis ct, pool, lawn, down long driveway leading to secluded 4bd/4ba 4007 sf hm w/Art Deco movie theater!

**Offered at \$2,950,000**



**OAKLAND**

**6250 Virgo Road**  
Upscale stylish 5bd/4ba 7743 sf Medit. on .25 ac blt in 2000 w/pano vus of SFO, bay & bridges. Hdwd flrs, gourmet kitchen w/stainless & granite, lux mstr retreat, sep bd/ba w/pvt entrance.

**Offered at \$1,495,000**

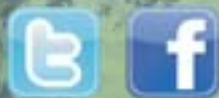
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