

Significant Dates

And Observances

- 11/3 Marks the end of Daylight Savings Time, so be sure to set your clocks an hour back. It is recommended that the batteries in all smoke detectors be changed and tested at this time. This way everyone should be able to remember that every 6 months, when the time changes take place, the batteries in smoke detectors should be changed as well.
- 11/5 Election Day. Don't forget to exercise your civic duty and vote for public officials.
- 11/11 Veterans Day is a federal holiday which honors those who have served in the armed forces.
- 11/27 The lighting of the first candle of the Menorah for Chanukah. In the Jewish religion holidays begin at sundown on the eve of the day before the holiday begins.
- 11/28 The first day of Chanukah, the eight-day Jewish holiday commemorating the rededication of the Holy Temple (The Second Temple) in Jerusalem. One additional candle is lit on each night of the holiday, progressing to eight on the final night. The extra light is called a shamash, and is given a distinct location, usually above or below the rest. The purpose of the shamash is to have a light available for practical use.
- 11/28 is also Thanksgiving Day, a federal holiday in the United States by presidential proclamation since 1863 and by state legislation since the days of our Founding Fathers. It is traditionally celebrated as a day of giving thanks for the blessing of the harvest and of the preceding year.



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"Helping You With Everything Retirement"

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Retirement Focus

A Monthly Insight Into Your Finances

Social Security Survivor's Benefits

BENEFITS



When you think of Social Security, you probably think of retirement. However, Social Security can also provide much-needed income to your family members when you die, making their financial lives easier.

Your family may be entitled to receive survivor's benefits based on your work record

When you die, certain members of your family may be eligible to receive survivor's benefits (based on your earnings record) if you worked, paid Social Security taxes, and earned enough work credits. The number of credits you need depends on your age when you die. The younger you are when you die, the fewer credits you'll need for survivor's benefits. However, no one needs

more than 40 credits (10 years of work) to be "fully insured" for benefits. And under a special rule, if you're only "currently insured" at the time of your death (i.e., you have 6 credits in the 13 quarters prior to your death), your children and your spouse who is caring for them can still receive benefits.

Survivor's benefits may be paid to:

- Your spouse age 60 or older (50 or older if disabled)
- Your spouse at any age, if caring for your child who is under age 16 or disabled
- Your ex-spouse age 60 or over (50 or older if disabled) who was married to you for at least 10 years
- Your ex-spouse at any age, if caring for your child who is under age 16 or disabled
- Your unmarried children under 18
- Your unmarried children under 19, if attending school full time (up to grade 12)
- Your dependent parents age 62 or older

This is a general overview--the rules are more complex. For more information on eligibility requirements, contact the Social Security Administration (SSA) at (800) 772-1213 or www.SSA.gov.

How much will your survivors receive?

An eligible family member will receive a monthly survivor's benefit based on your average lifetime earnings. The higher your earnings, the higher the benefit. This monthly benefit is equal to a percentage of your basic Social Security benefit. The percentage depends on your survivor's age and relationship to you.

For example, at full retirement age or older, your spouse may receive a survivor's benefit equal to 100 percent of your basic Social Security benefit. However, if your spouse has not yet reached full retirement age at the time of your death, he or she will receive a reduced benefit, generally 71 to 94 percent of your basic benefit (75 percent if your spouse is caring for a child under age 16). Your dependent child may also receive 75 percent of your basic benefit.

A maximum family benefit rate caps the total amount of money your survivors can get each month. The total benefit your family can receive based on your earnings record is about 150 to 180 percent of your basic benefit amount. If the total family benefit exceeds this limit, each family member's benefit will be reduced proportionately.

You can get an estimate of how much your survivors might be eligible to receive using one of the benefit calculators available on the Social Security website, www.ssa.gov.

Don't forget the lump-sum benefit

If you've accumulated enough work credits, your spouse may receive a lump-sum benefit of \$255. Your spouse must have been living with you at the time of your death or have been receiving benefits based on your earnings record if living apart from you. If you're not married at the time of your death, the death benefit may be split among any children you have who are eligible for benefits based on your earnings record.

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Continued >>> Social Security Survivor's Benefits

If a loved one has died, contact the Social Security Administration immediately

If a loved one has died and you are eligible for survivor's benefits, you should contact the SSA right away. If you're already receiving benefits based on your spouse's earnings record, the SSA will change your payments to survivor's benefits (if your children are receiving benefits, their benefits will be changed, too). But if you're not yet receiving any Social Security benefits or if you're receiving benefits based on your own earnings record, you'll have to fill out an application for survivor's benefits.

It's helpful to have the following documents when you apply, but if you don't have all the information required, the SSA can help you get it:

- Proof of death (a death certificate or funeral home notice)
- Your Social Security number, as well as the deceased worker's number
- Your birth certificate
- Your marriage certificate, if you're a widow or widower
- Your divorce papers, if applicable
- Dependent children's Social Security numbers, if available
- Deceased worker's W-2 forms, or federal self-employment tax return, for the most recent year
- The name of your bank, as well as your account numbers, for direct deposit

The Financial Realities of Relocating



With the housing market and overall economy starting to improve, more Americans are packing up and relocating. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of people moving for a new job or transfer numbered 3.5 million in 2011-2012, up from 2.8 million the previous year.

Whether you're planning to move for a new job or transfer, or you're accompanying a spouse or partner who has accepted a new position, it's important to consider how your new location will impact your bottom line.

Comparing costs

There are many costs that can vary from one geographic location to the next. Depending on where you're moving to, you may be in for a pleasant surprise or a financial shock. Here are some things to consider:

•Housing. The cost of housing is a significant financial factor in your move. Relocating from a high-cost area like New York City to a lower-cost area like San Antonio might translate into several thousand dollars' worth of annual savings on housing costs. Also, keep in mind that if you're buying property, higher housing costs will most likely mean higher real estate taxes.

•General cost of living. Aside from housing, will other items like groceries, transportation, utilities (e.g., heating/cooling, electricity, water, cable/phone/Internet), health care, and child care cost more or less in your new location?

•State and local income taxes. Seven states have no income tax--Alaska, Florida, Nevada, South Dakota, Texas, Washington, and Wyoming.

Other states have a variety of state and local income taxes. You can use an online paycheck calculator to get an estimate of what your net income will be in different states.

Bottom line--will your new location cost more or less? If you haven't already negotiated your new salary, you can investigate the salary you would need to earn at your new location to maintain your current standard of living. Many online job boards have cost-of-living comparison tools where you can compare the costs of different locations.

Other considerations

You may also have other considerations that partly involve costs, for example:

•Commuting time. Will your new commute be longer than your current one? In addition to costing more, a longer commute will mean less time for you to spend at home or on personal endeavors.

•Family and friends. Will you be moving far away from family and/or friends? If so, there might be airfare and/or other travel costs in your future. Unfortunately, airfares at peak travel times like holidays and school vacations are typically the most expensive. You may also find yourself allocating more of your vacation time for visits with family.

•Keeping up with the Joneses. No one wants to admit this is even a factor, but you might be surprised at the subtle influence this dynamic can have on your bottom line. For example, does everyone in your new neighborhood drive a certain kind of car, hire professional landscapers, or send their children to camp all summer?

•Your spouse's job prospects. Has your spouse/partner been able to find a job in your new location? If not, are there ample job opportunities for someone with his/her experience and skills?

Relocation expenses

As for how you'll pay for the move, some employers offer relocation packages that cover the costs associated with selling your house, hiring a moving company, transporting your belongings and vehicles, finding a new house, and paying for food, fuel, and lodging along the way. If not, you'll be on the hook. But you may be able to deduct some of your moving expenses; for more information, see IRS Publication 521, Moving Expenses.

Thanksgivukkah

Thanksgiving is a time honored tradition for most Americans, as is Hanukkah for most Jewish-Americans. And as it happens, for the first time in our lifetimes, the first day of Hanukkah falls on the same day as Thanksgiving. Combined, these holidays become "Thanksgivukkah."

Try incorporating both holidays this year in your dinner menu, substituting traditional Thanksgiving foods with traditional Chanukah side dishes, or modify your menu (e.g., roasting your turkey with cranberry applesauce).

This holiday won't happen again for 70,000 years!



Recipes

Cranberry Applesauce



Ingredients:

- 2 cups fresh or frozen cranberries
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp ground nutmeg
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup Manischewitz Concord Grape wine
- 4 large Granny Smith apples

Preparation:

In a medium sauce pot, combine cranberries, spices, sugar, and Manischewitz. Bring mixture to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer 20 minutes. Peel and core apples, then cut them into large chunks (approximately 1/2" cubes), and add to the cranberry mixture. Cover sauce and continue to simmer for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. If sauce begins to stick, add water.

Remove from heat and cool to room temperature before serving. (Serves 10-12)

Challah-Apple Stuffing



Ingredients:

- 2 1-lb loaves challah (sold at Giant stores)
- 1 cup unsalted butter (2 sticks)
- 2 cups diced celery
- 2 cups diced onion
- 2 cups peeled and diced Granny Smith apples
- 8 sprigs thyme, finely chopped
- 3 sprigs rosemary, finely chopped
- 6 sprigs marjoram, finely chopped
- 3 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- kosher salt
- freshly ground pepper, to taste

Preparation:

Cut challah into 1-inch cubes and let sit out in a bowl or on a baking tray, uncovered, for at least 6 hours to make them stale. Alternatively, you can dry bread in the oven at 250 degrees by laying cubes in a single layer on baking sheets and baking about 30 minutes, or until bread is dry but not toasted (it should not start to brown at all).

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Saute butter over medium-low heat, then add onions and celery. Add 3 tps of salt and ground pepper to taste, and cook until onions are soft, about 8 minutes. Add apples and herbs and cook until apples are soft, about 5 more minutes.

In a large bowl, combine challah cubes, cooked vegetables in butter, and chicken broth. Mix until the bread is saturated with liquid, and everything is evenly mixed. Press stuffing into 9x13" baking dish and cover with foil. Bake at 350 degrees for 40 minutes, then remove the foil, raise oven to 450 degrees, and cook uncovered for another 10-15 minutes, or until the top starts to brown slightly.

Cool 10 minutes, then serve. (Serves 10-12)

Horseradish Chive Mashed Potatoes



Ingredients:

- 1 head of garlic
- 1 tsp olive oil
- 1/4 tsp kosher salt
- 3 lbs Russet or Yukon Gold potatoes
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter (1 stick), melted
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 3 tps kosher salt
- freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 1 bunch chives
- 3 Tbs prepared horseradish

Preparation:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Cut the top off of the head of garlic, and peel. Place on a square of aluminum foil, and drizzle olive oil and 1/4 tsp kosher salt. Wrap tightly in aluminum foil and roast about 45 minutes, until soft. Let cool for about an hour, still wrapped in foil. Then, squeeze the soft roasted garlic out of the skin, and mix with a fork until paste-like.

Peel potatoes and cut into 1" cubes. Put potatoe cubes in a large pot and cover by 2" with cold, unsalted water, then put the pot on the stove and bring to a boil. Meanwhile, finely slice the chives.

Boil potatoes until they are fork tender -- this should take 40-60 minutes -- then drain completely.

While potatoes are still hot, put them in a large mixing bowl and add butter, cream, horseradish, roasted garlic, and 2/3 of sliced chives. Season with salt and pepper and beat with an electric beater on low until combined, about a minute. Turn the mixer on high and beat for another 1-2 minutes, until potatoes are completely mashed and smooth.

To serve, sprinkle remaining chives on top of the potatoes. (Serves 10-12)