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AUTUMN ADVENTURES AWAIT

Celebrate the Spirit of Fall: From Oktoberfest to Apple Picking

Fall is my favorite time of year. I am not a fan of extreme heat or the winter freeze. For those of you in Staten Island or nearby, the fall months offer countless opportunities to experience the best this season has to offer. I wanted to share a few of my favorite ways to soak in the season and give you some inspiration on how to make the most of this beautiful time of year.

Staten Island Oktoberfest: A Family-Friendly Celebration

One of the season's most anticipated events is Staten Island's Oktoberfest, which will take place on Saturday, Oct. 5, from 12–7 p.m. Held at SIUH Community Park at St. George (home of the Ferryhawks), the festival will feature live music, games, rides for kids, and delicious food and drinks.

Hosted by Staten Island's five Rotary Clubs and Rolling Thunder Chapter 2, this event has drawn over 20,000 visitors and raised more than \$200,000 to support our veterans. The German-inspired menu includes classic bratwursts, pretzels, and other hearty dishes perfect for a cool autumn day. And for the adults, there's plenty of beer to sample from local and imported brewers. Hope to see you there!

Venture Out to New Jersey Apple Orchards

One of the classic autumn activities I recommend is apple picking. And living in Staten Island (or Brooklyn!) makes it easy to access some of New Jersey's best orchards. These orchards offer more than just apple picking — they feature hayrides, pumpkin patches, and farm markets stocked with fresh cider, homemade pies, and other seasonal treats.

Apple picking is a perfect way to connect with the season, walking through orchards with the crisp air around you can be



an incredibly relaxing and joyful way to spend a fall afternoon. For a fun follow-up, try your hand at baking your own apple pie or homemade applesauce!

Halloween Fun for All Ages

Whether you love decorating your home, attending costume parties, or taking the kids out for trick-or-treating, Halloween offers something for everyone. For families with kids, I highly recommend getting tickets in advance to the Staten Island Zoo's Spooktacular, which will be held Oct. 19–20. This event is one of my favorites, and I fondly remember my kids and their friends in costumes walking through the zoo at night.

This family-friendly Halloween celebration offers live music, scare zones, interactive costumed characters, theater shows that bring the holiday to life, and carnival games with giveaways. It's the perfect way to dive into the Halloween spirit.

Make the Most of Fall

Autumn is a time of transition and reflection, but it's also a season full of adventure and joy. Whether you're enjoying the Staten Island Oktoberfest, apple picking in New Jersey, or getting ready for Halloween, take time to slow down and appreciate all that this season has to offer. Get outside, try something new, and enjoy the little moments with the people you love.

-Brian O'Connor

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BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL

TIKTOK IS CHALLENGING THE BAN

The clock is ticking for TikTok, the world's most popular social media app, as it faces a federal ultimatum: Either the Chinese parent company, ByteDance, sells its stake in the company, or TikTok will be removed from U.S. app stores by Jan. 19, 2025. It is difficult to fathom that an app downloaded tens of millions of times and receiving over \$100 million in revenue every month may leave the American market at the start of next year. But this is just the U.S. government's latest step since TikTok first arrived on the scene.

The TikTok Saga

Douyin, the predecessor to TikTok, started in China in 2016. In 2017, it merged with Musical.ly, an app for posting lip-syncing videos; at one point, it topped the charts on the Apple App Store and soon rose to global stardom. Then, the app got a new name, TikTok, and a revolutionary algorithm. The algorithm influenced users to binge-watch content and presented videos from various genres and topics to keep them hooked. While gaining popularity stateside, it drew no small amount of scrutiny from government watchdogs and federal agencies.

In September 2019, the Washington Post reported that images of democratic protests in Hong Kong were being suppressed, while posts with the #trump2020 tag received millions of views. TikTok denied political favoritism and alleged their app was a neutral platform. Despite TikTok's reassurance, the Pentagon recommended all U.S. military personnel delete the app from their phones, regardless of whether it was for personal or government work. In January 2020, the Pentagon banned the app entirely on all military phones.

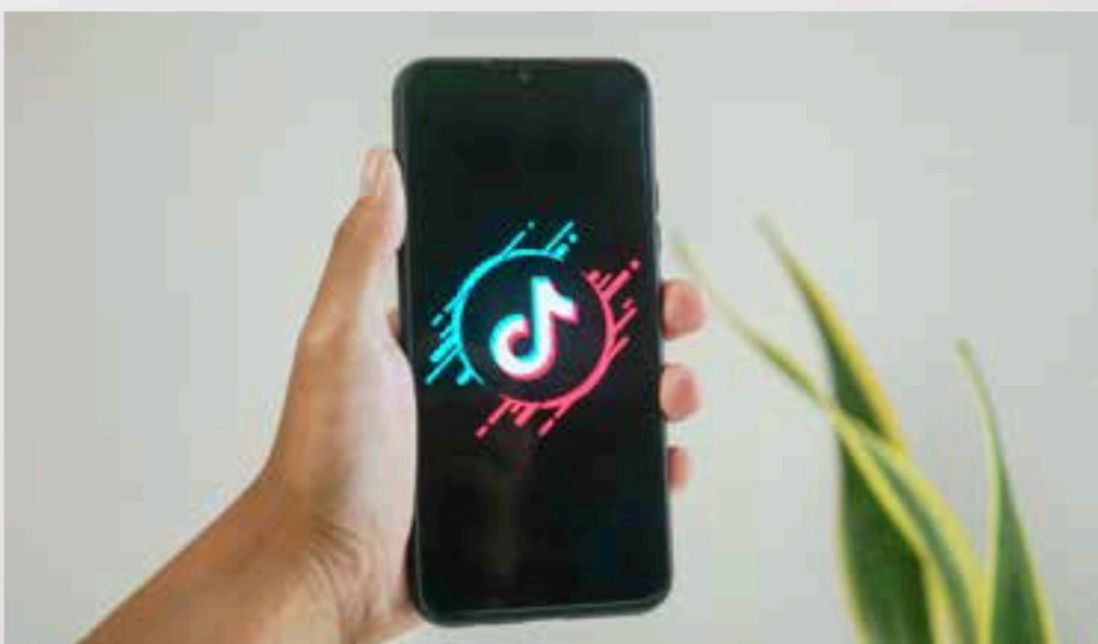
"On its website, TikTok describes the moves it has made to improve data security and privacy. Still, none of these measures have persuaded the federal government of their benign intentions."

In May 2020, privacy groups began to raise concerns that TikTok posed a threat to children. Just two months later, India banned TikTok following a military clash at their disputed border with China. Despite these hiccups, TikTok claimed to have over a billion monthly users by September 2021. Further problems with the app materialized in 2022 when viral hoaxes and harmful content promoting eating disorders caused outrage nationwide. In December 2022, the FBI warned that the Chinese government could use the app to influence American citizens. In 2024, Congress drafted legislation to ban the app and force ByteDance to sell TikTok officially.

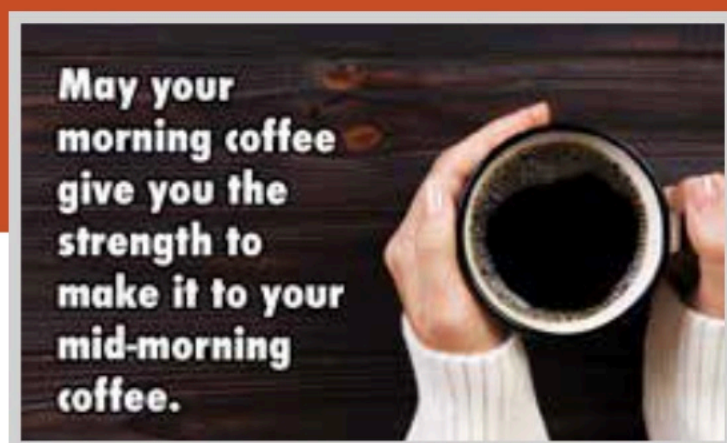
The Future of TikTok

President Biden signed H.R. 815 into law on April 24, 2024, which contains a provision that "prohibits distributing, maintaining, updating, or providing internet hosting services for a foreign adversary controlled application (e.g., TikTok)."

That is strong language and indicates the government is not likely to back down from its demands. Despite this, TikTok has challenged the law, arguing the ban is unconstitutional. More than a dozen social and racial justice groups recently supported TikTok's cause. On its website, TikTok describes the moves it has made to improve data security and privacy. Still, none of these measures have persuaded the federal government of their benign intentions. In June 2024, in response to the ban being signed into law, TikTok released a letter alleging that the Biden administration had negotiated with the company using "political demagoguery," or, in other words, in favor of appealing to voters rather than finding an equitable solution. Their case is headed to the U.S. Court of Appeals later this year.



TAKE A *BREAK*



PUMPKIN PIE FRENCH TOAST

Inspired by [AllRecipes.com](https://www.allrecipes.com)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 tsp vegetable oil, or as needed
- 1/2 cup half-and-half
- 1/4 cup canned pumpkin purée
- 3 large eggs
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/4 tsp pumpkin pie spice
- 1/4 cup finely chopped walnuts
- 8 slices day-old bread
- Maple syrup, to taste

DIRECTIONS

1. Lightly oil a skillet and heat over medium heat.
2. Whisk half-and-half, pumpkin purée, eggs, cinnamon, vanilla, and pumpkin pie spice together in a bowl. Stir in walnuts until evenly distributed.
3. Place 1 slice of bread in the bowl and let it soak briefly to coat both sides. Lift bread to let excess liquid drip back into the bowl, then transfer to the hot skillet.
4. Cook for 2–3 minutes or until golden brown, then flip and cook the other side until done.
5. Stir batter to redistribute walnuts and repeat with other slices of bread, cooking in several batches if necessary.
6. Serve warm with maple syrup.

The Strange Gas Law WHY THE 9/10 OF A CENT?

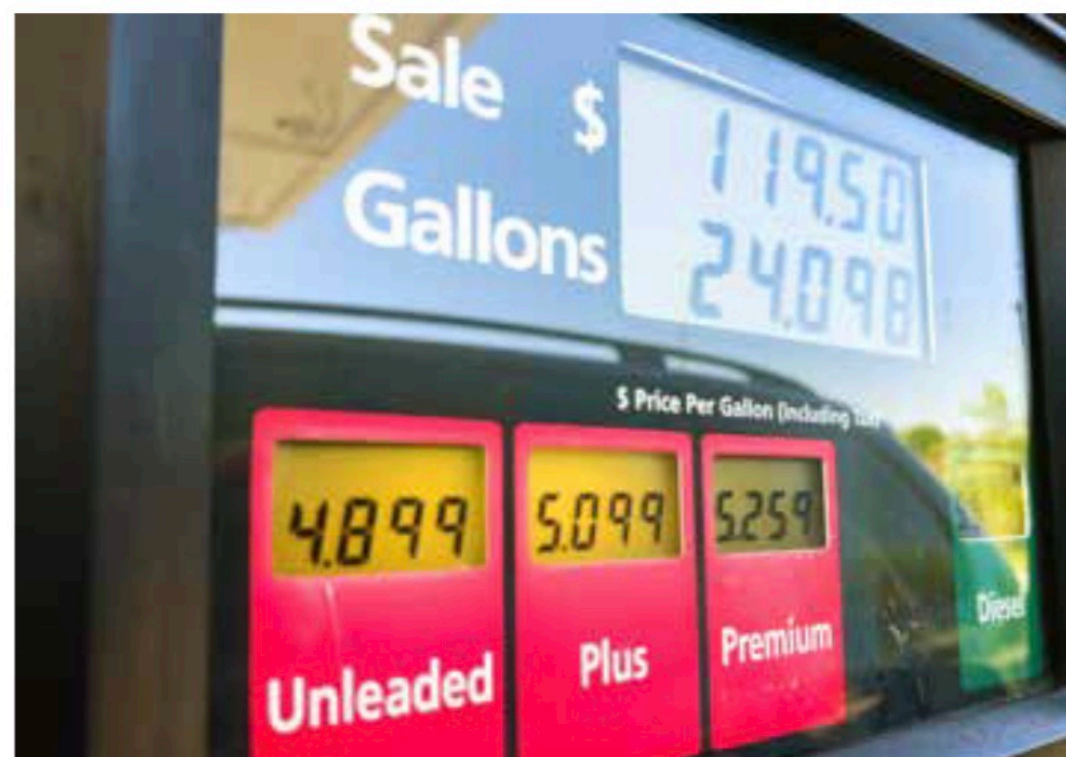
Gas prices are often a topic of conversation, but usually for less-than-pleasant reasons. Whenever the subject appears in the news, it is most often because prices have become *outrageously high*. However, this article will take a different approach. Have you ever wondered why gas price tickers include a 9/10 of a cent at the end? It started nearly a century ago but remains to this day for surprising reasons.

Great Depression Decisions

The 1930s were a time of great economic uncertainty. The stock market crashed in 1929, and the federal government took extensive measures to balance the budget. Among these was the Revenue Act of 1932. This law introduced several tax hikes, including a more than 20% increase in estate and personal income taxes. However, it also introduced a one-cent tariff on gasoline and fuel oil. While this may not seem like a lot in today's currency — the average cost of a gallon of gas now is around \$3.53 — back then, it was a significant burden on motorists. After all, the average price of a gallon of gas in 1932 was just \$0.18, so a one-cent tariff represented a more than 5% increase in price. In today's money, it would be equivalent to a \$0.22 tax per gallon of gas. In 1933, the gas tariff accounted for 8% of the federal government's tax revenue.

Fractional Prices

Gas station owners paid the new tariff when purchasing their fuel from suppliers, but they had the option of paying the tax themselves, in full or in part, to take the hit in place of their customers. This is where fractional prices first came into play: Gas station owners would advertise that they were paying, say, half of the one-cent tariff on gasoline, which means their prices would only increase by 5/10 of a cent. Over time, the tariff became less relevant, but fractional prices remained. This has largely contributed to the psychological aspect of paying 9/10 of a cent rather than a full cent — the same thinking behind charging \$1.99 rather than \$2 for a product.



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NFL'S RECENT ANTITRUST RULING

WHAT LED TO THE HISTORIC FINE OVER SUNDAY TICKET

NFL Sunday Ticket, also known as Sunday Ticket, is a sports package allowing purchasers to view regular season NFL games not carried by local broadcasts in their area. Sunday Ticket has been around since 1994, with DirecTV offering it exclusively until 2022 when the NFL signed a seven-year, \$14 billion deal



with Google's YouTube TV. However, the NFL's exclusive deals for Sunday Ticket have come at a cost. After a trial in June that lasted just three weeks, a jury in Los Angeles awarded over \$4.7 billion in damages to the plaintiffs in an antitrust class-action lawsuit against the NFL.

The Trial

The Mucky Duck sports bar in San Francisco initially filed the suit in 2015; an appeals court dismissed then reinstated the case in 2017 before it became a class-action lawsuit. The lawsuit now covers about 2.4 million residential subscribers and 48,000 business subscribers. The plaintiffs alleged that the NFL's agreement with DirecTV, and now YouTube TV, violated antitrust laws. Not only did the NFL allegedly overcharge both residential and commercial subscribers, but it also removed competition. It forced fans to purchase access to all games rather than

offering the ability to purchase only the games they were interested in. For instance, if you are a Philadelphia Eagles fan but live in Florida, your local on-air broadcasts are unlikely to show Eagles games. In that case, if you wanted to watch all the Eagles' games, you'd have to shell out a good chunk of change to access those games. As of 2024, a subscription to NFL Sunday Ticket costs \$449 per year.

After five hours of deliberation, the jury agreed with the plaintiffs and awarded \$4.7 billion in damages to the residential subscribers and \$96 million to the business subscribers. Due to federal antitrust laws, those damages can be tripled. That means the NFL may be liable for up to \$14.39 billion in damages. The NFL has appealed the decision, but if upheld, each NFL team could be forced to pay nearly \$450 million in damages.