



We Got a Pandemic Pet

Meet Luna the Cat

I know I'm not alone when I say that the last year has been hard. Even though there is some relief in sight, the pandemic has definitely had a lasting impact on my family, so we recently decided to add a new furball to the crew, a cat named Luna.

I had a cat for 17 years named Oriel. She adopted me right after I finished law school when I was living alone in an apartment in Brooklyn. I didn't have time to tend to a dog at that point, but I did want a companion to come home to. Oriel was my constant companion who stuck with me as we moved from that Brooklyn bachelor pad to New Jersey and then to Minnesota.

Oriel died last summer after 17 great years, and the kids were really missing having a pet around. If you have animals at home, you know what great mood boosters they can be. My wife and I figured we could all use a boost and that we missed having a feline friend, so we started looking at a local shelter that rescues street cats from Mexico and puts them up for adoption here after they're all cleaned up and healthy.

That's how we found our sweet little kitty, Luna. We got her in February just before she was about to move to a new foster home. After meeting her, we knew she was the cat for us, so we told the shelter they didn't need to move her to a foster home; we wanted her right away.

Luna is about 15 months old and she's quiet but very sweet, so we were happy to get to adopt her. She was definitely a little overwhelmed by having our family of five all loving on her at once, but she's adapting to the household. One good metric to judge her comfort is where she's sleeping. She started off sleeping at my feet, then moved up to my hip. She's working her way up to my head, and that's when I'll know she's settled in. Oriel used to sleep on my head, too. A few minutes after getting into bed, I'd feel these fuzzy earmuffs around me and know she was settling in for the night.

Aside from lifting the mood, having a pet also teaches many lessons. The kids are learning responsibility through the daily care the cat needs — feeding her, playing with her, and cleaning out her litter box. Pets are also great teachers of relaxation. Luna's favorite activity is sitting and looking out the window.



She can pass a good part of the day just watching the world go by. It's a good reminder to all of us to slow down and enjoy the simple things.

How a person treats animals also says a lot about them, so having an animal in the house tells us a lot about our visitors. People who put their hand out for the cat to sniff always tend to be good people. Luna also does a good job of reminding me to keep things in perspective. I often think of how our house is her whole world, just like for me and my family, our neighborhood or city can feel like the whole world. But it's not. We're just one small part of a much larger picture. There's a whole country beyond us and a world beyond that's just a speck in a larger galaxy. Who knew a cat could make me so philosophical?

The first week of May is National Pet Week. Maybe it's time to add a new animal to your pack, or just a good reminder to pet the furry friends already in your life and appreciate all the good they bring us.

- Andrew M. Ayers

Bring Spring Indoors

The Most Beautiful May Flowers for Your Home or Office

The April showers came and went, so now we get to enjoy May flowers! You might not buy flowers for yourself often, but it's totally worth treating yourself and your visitors, all while supporting your local florist!

To start off, **anemones** are the most mythological May plant around because of two famous Greek myths surrounding these jewel-toned flowers. Anemones are said to have sprung from blood shed by the death of Aphrodite's lover, Adonis. The ancient Greeks also believed that the god of the west wind favored anemones — hence their second name, the windflower.

Attach them as pops of color to any bouquet for a classic, romantic, or modern arrangement, or mix them with roses and trailing greenery for a more boho look.

Carnations are also fantastic flowers to display in May. Some people may see carnations as a cheap flower, but, when used en masse, they can have a truly breathtaking effect in a room. Try using natural-colored carnations to create a fresh, contemporary space.

You can also freshen up the room with **sweet peas**, which have a wonderfully mild perfume. They come with an enormous range of colors — one of the biggest ranges in the flora kingdom, in fact!

Delicate, ruffled, and feminine, sweet peas are sure to delight anyone who sees them.

Lastly, although **tulips** or **orchids** would be classic choices for your arrangement, consider surprising your visitors with **lilies of the valley**. These beautiful, peaceful little blooms only grow in white, which is often seen as the color of renewal and innocence, and they wear it well! Their adorable little bell-like flowers will be sure to put a smile on your face.

We hope you will consider these gorgeous flowers for your space this year. A small purchase at your local small businesses can make a big difference, just like how a few flowers can make a big difference in your home!



The 3 Strangest Celebrity Lawsuits

Stories about celebrities can be enjoyable or awkward, but no matter what happens, they usually create great material for BuzzFeed or Reddit users. This also includes celebrity stories involving the law, which bring on a lot of head-scratching and legal action — like these three strange cases.

Simon Cowell pays for a chef's disappearing shoes.

Known for his unrelenting critiques and setting the stage for some of the world's biggest names in show business, Simon Cowell has amassed enough wealth to afford a private chef. When one such chef came by his house for a job interview, she was asked to remove her shoes, but according to court documents, she never received her shoes back. The chef claims to have tried multiple times to retrieve the shoes — which were outfitted with \$500 orthopedic insoles — but never succeeded. She sued Cowell for the shoes and gas money, and the "America's Got Talent" star shelled out.



Internet conspiracy theory results in a court case against Beyoncé.

The internet is a wild place, and conspiracy theories are often born on its digital channels. One such theory was that Beyoncé and her husband, Jay-Z, hired a surrogate to give birth to their daughter, Blue Ivy, in 2012. Internet trolls who saw her pregnant belly roll as she sat down for an interview fanned the flames of this theory, and soon, a lawsuit emerged. A woman claimed she was the true biological mother of Blue Ivy, and she asked for compensation and DNA testing to prove it. Previously, the same woman claimed to be the birth mother of North West, the daughter of Kim Kardashian and Kanye West, but the court threw out the case.

Mila Kunis ruffles some feathers.

Actress Mila Kunis was sued for \$5,000 by her childhood friend, Kristina Karo, in 2015 because Kunis allegedly stole a chicken from Karo when they were still children in Ukraine. Karo, an aspiring singer, claimed the theft resulted in extreme emotional distress and prevented her from pursuing the American dream. According to Kunis, the theft occurred when she was 7 years old and Karo was just 1 month old. Kunis and her husband, actor Ashton Kutcher, speculated that the case was all a publicity stunt to promote Karo's upcoming music video, and the case was eventually dropped.

TAKE A BREAK



THAI MINCED PORK SALAD

Inspired by EatingThaiFood.com

Ingredients

- 5 tbsp uncooked Thai sticky rice
- 1 lb ground pork
- 1/2 tbsp chili flakes
- 1/8 tsp sugar
- 1/2 tbsp fish sauce
- Juice of 1–2 limes, to taste
- 4 small shallots, thinly sliced
- 4 green onions, thinly sliced
- Cilantro leaves, to taste
- Mint leaves, to taste

Directions

1. First, make toasted rice powder: In a frying pan over low heat, dry-roast the rice, stirring continuously until it turns golden brown and smells fragrant, about 15 minutes.
2. Let toasted rice cool, then grind into a coarse powder using a mortar and pestle, blender, or food processor. Set aside.
3. In a medium frying pan over medium-high heat, fry pork, breaking it into small pieces as you go, until fully cooked.
4. Remove from heat and add 1 heaping tbsp of toasted rice powder along with all other ingredients. Stir to combine.
5. Taste and adjust, adding more lime juice and herbs to suit your palate. Serve with rice.

WILL EUROPE BE ABLE TO PAY ITS \$3.2T PANDEMIC DEBT?

Millions of families in Europe have relied heavily on government aid for survival, but that's becoming a concern for the younger generation. European debt hasn't been so high since World War II, and it's even outpacing national economies. In France alone, the national debt has risen to 2.7 trillion euros (\$3.2 trillion) and will soon exceed 120% of the national economy.

While the International Monetary Fund expects growth to bounce back this year to 5.1% in the United States, Europe will likely lag with a rebound of 4.2%.

Yet, as debts skyrocket, economists wonder if it's possible for Europe to get a "free lunch."

In the current zero-interest era, strange things are happening. Although the amount of debt companies have taken has grown, the amount that governments pay hasn't. Countries can now roll over their debt at low interest rates, which is akin to refinancing a mortgage. Banks are also buying government debt, effectively lending around 1.3 trillion euros during the first six months of the pandemic.

This makes the debt affordable — for now. Government debt may never have to be fully paid back if central banks keep buying it up. According to the Institut Montaigne, an independent think tank in Paris, public debt could rise to 4 trillion by the end of 2023.

Some economists are worried about the risks. What if inflation and interest rates help revive growth too rapidly, forcing central banks to put a complete stop to their easy-money policies? Weaker countries may fall into a debt trap and struggle to pay. Simon Tilford, director of a strategic planning firm in London, told *The New York Times*, "If inflation starts to return but there's no growth, then the situation gets a lot trickier."



When the next recession rolls around, it may be tough to stimulate their economy with this amount of debt on their hands. This worries the younger generation of Europeans, but at least for now, those troubles seem far away in the eyes of those steering European economies through the pandemic.



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Influencer in Florida Accused of Voter Fraud

A February 2016 analysis by MIT Media Lab revealed that Twitter account “Ricky Vaughn” was the 107th most important influencer in the then-upcoming election. That’s a higher ranking than many other groups and individuals like NBC News (114), Stephen Colbert (119), and Newt Gingrich (141). Everyone had one question: Who in the world is Ricky Vaughn?

As it turns out, the Florida man was really stepping up his game. Douglass Mackey, aka Ricky Vaughn, is based in West Palm Beach and gained an audience on Twitter with over 58,000 followers by 2016. Many would describe him as an internet troll, or someone who posts hurtful comments for his own amusement. He’s posted anti-Semitic memes in the past, though, those offenses were hardly illegal. That changed when Mackey allegedly went too far.



Using hashtags like #go[candidate], Mackey posted false, edited campaign images to convince people to “vote” by text instead of going to the polls or using the mail-in ballot. In one instance, he posted an image depicting an African American woman holding a sign, reading “African Americans for [candidate].” The images would then include instructions on how to vote by texting a specific number. Mackey and his associates also created images with Spanish instructions, obviously targeting minorities as well.

Of course, voting by text is not a legitimate way to cast a ballot, yet the deceptive campaign duped over 4,900 unique phone numbers. William F. Sweeney Jr., assistant director in charge of the FBI’s New York Field Office, reported in their press release, “Protecting every American citizen’s right to cast a legitimate vote is a key to the success of our republic. What Mackey allegedly did to interfere with this process — by soliciting voters to cast their ballots via text — amounted to nothing short of vote theft.”

It’s certainly fascinating and terrifying to see just how influential social media can be on an election and even go as far as to lure people into wasting their vote. We’re glad, however, to see these types of cases being brought to court — Mackey was recently arrested on federal charges of election interference for this 2016 voter disinformation campaign. Some influencers are taking their title much too seriously!