

The Household WORD



ISSUE 6, JANUARY '05

A Newsletter about homes, you...and Bill

In this issue:

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Magnificent Architecture...

*The Coliseum;
the doors of the
San Gimignano;
and Vatican City
in the rain.*



ALL I WANT
FOR CHRISTMAS...
IS A TRIP TO
ITALY



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RE/MAX
Associates of Lancaster

Christmas 2003, I was in one of those “what to get KT for Christmas this year” quandaries. We had just celebrated our 20th anniversary four weeks prior, so the “little blue box” appeared at that time and was not going to make another appearance just 30 days later. Hmmm? There had been some mention about wanting to go to Italy, Tuscany, in particular, but neither of us had discussed it in any detail. Regardless, I knew scheduling would be a problem. Besides, all previous trips to Europe were for long weekends (fly over Wednesday night and fly back home Monday). I figured once it was on the calendar it would be too late for the schedule to be of issue. And, with the question of how long USAirways would remain solvent, what a great opportunity to use those frequent traveler awards before they expire. Anyway, who could say no to a trip to Italy?

Thus, the surprise was booked and scheduled for a long weekend in May. Keep in mind that this was only for a long weekend, making it necessary to get the most out of the short time we would be there. Enter longtime friend and client Cricket Hile of Travel Time Travel. She recommended an arrival in Rome, connecting with a train to Florence, a side trip to Siena and San Gimignano via the Tuscan countryside, back to Rome via train, with the rest of the time spent in Rome prior to flying back to Philadelphia. Whew! Are you exhausted? Trust me, we were wiped out, but I wouldn't have changed anything as Cricket executed the details brilliantly.

We began our trip from Philadelphia by relaxing in the first class lounge at Philadelphia International Airport prior to boarding our giant Airbus to Italy. Flying Envoy Class is the way to go with TV monitors at each articulated and infinitely adjustable seat. I can't imagine what the tickets would have cost had we not been able to use our miles!

Eight hours later we arrived in Rome only to find that there was no gate available to accept our plane. After some



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delay, a set of stairs was wheeled up to the plane and we deplaned the old fashioned way, only to find ourselves standing on the tarmac next to 747's and the like rolling by. Man, are they big from down on the ground! A bus took us to

the terminal packed in like a can of sardines. Once we retrieved our luggage we were off to the airport train station to catch our next train from Rome's main station to Florence. Packed in like sardines, yet again, we took the short (although it seemed long) and incredibly hot train ride to Rome. It was standing room only with no open windows, the humidity was so high my glasses kept fogging over!

Alas, the Rome train station was announced and we exited our train with only minutes to spare prior to departing for Florence. The bad news—we were the last car of the train on track one and we needed to catch the next to the last car of a train on track 12.

The distance we had to travel in the time we had seemed insurmountable and convinced me that we would surely miss our train. Fortunately, it was late (apparently standard operating procedure for the Italian railroad) and we were spared. Fortunately, too, that Cricket suggested an all-reserved seat, air-conditioned Eurostar train for the two-hour ride to Florence. We were so tired I knew KT would fall asleep as soon as she hit the seat. I tried desperately to stay awake, not only so that I would not miss the passing Italian countryside, but also in fear of missing our stop in Florence. All the drama would be over by this point and the rest of the trip continued on smooth as could be.

Every time I've been to Europe I can't help but reflect how much history there is and how careful the Europeans are to preserve it. Here in the States we think 200 years is old! I marvel at how quick we are to tear things down and build anew, while the Europeans reuse and adapt their existing structures to modern-day life. There is a lesson to be learned here.

Florence is a beautiful, picturesque city. Our hotel was a short two blocks from the train station right in the middle of the action. After a power nap we hit the ground running. The weather was spectacular, perfect for those of us who insist on wearing shorts 12 months of the year. Once we got our bearings, we began our trek like typical American tourists, looking up rather than where we were going. Florence (or Firenze as the Italians call it) is a study in architectural beauty. Everywhere you look there are spectacular buildings, especially huge, ornate cathedrals. One is amazed at the detail as well as how these were built without the aid of

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modern machinery. We toured our first cathedral, the Duomo (completed in the late 1460's), which offered a seemingly unending 435-stair walk to its cupola via a small, narrow, winding staircase. Along the way were small ventilation holes in the stone which enabled me to photograph the city from high above. We also visited Florence's other great cathedral, Santa Maria Novella, an incredibly ornate building completed in 1456. The rest of the day was spent walking up and down the

streets of Florence, taking in the beauty of the city which sits on the Arno River. I lost count of how many times we crossed the bridges from one side of the city to the other, taking time to stop in at various shops (KT was hell-bent on a leather coat from Italy which she succeeded in purchasing) and an occasional bite to eat and drink.



The next morning we were met by our driver in an E-Class Mercedes at our hotel. His English was not the best, but we somehow managed to communicate and I got to use what little Italian I practiced prior to our arrival. Cricket had arranged our pick up with a drive through the Tuscan countryside to Siena where we would meet our

guide, Gabriella, for the rest of the day. The drive through the Italian countryside was not unlike a drive through Lancaster County, certain exceptions aside. The rolling countryside reminded us of home, yet the landscape was dotted with tile-roofed stucco buildings. The fields were ablaze with red poppies everywhere (somehow I managed not to take a single picture of this phenomenon). The biggest difference from home is the fact that everyone in Italy thinks they are Michael Schumacher! Italians drive like crazed lunatics always jockeying for position and constantly blowing their horns. Amazingly, we arrived in Siena unscathed to meet Gabriella.

Our guide was masterful in her knowledge of Italian art and architecture. She did an excellent job of helping us understand the symbolism and historical importance of all the paintings, frescos, architecture and artwork before our eyes. Admittedly, little of this would have made much sense without her expert guidance and her ability to put things into a historical context. Lines were long, although Gabriella was able to eliminate the wait wherever we went due to her credentials. A lesson learned for future trips!

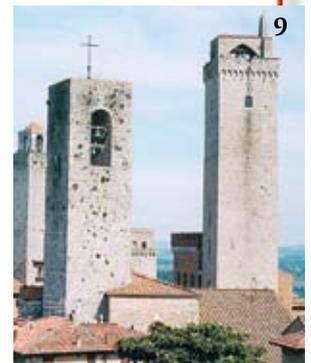
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1. *The Duomo in Florence.*
2. *Check out the detail in the architecture of the Duomo!*
3. *Could I help but take a great photo? This was just on of the many photos I took from the little windows while traversing the stairs of the Duomo.*
4. *What a beautiful sight! This is Florence along the Arno River.*
5. *Piazza del Campo in Siena.*
6. *The beautiful streets of San Gimignano.*
7. *The Santa Maria Novella cathedral in Florence.*
8. *The exterior of the Pantheon clearly shows the brick exterior sheathed in marble veneer.*
9. *The towers of San Gimignano.*
10. *The remains of The Forum. Huge! Notice all the marble is gone.*

Siena is a medieval city of narrow, hilly streets centered around the Piazza del Campo, home of the Palio. The Palio is a horse race that has taken place annually for 700 years around the circumference of the piazza where ancient rivalries are still played out among the various parishes within the city. We toured the church of San Domenico as well as the Duomo with its striped marble walls, an architectural style known as Pisan-Romanesque. One is literally overwhelmed by the vastness of the artwork and architecture. After a brief lunch in the Piazza del Campo we were back in the car and off to the walled city of San Gimignano.

San Gimignano is a medieval village of ancient towers that sit atop a hillside over-

—continued on p.4

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looking the Italian countryside. The views are nothing short of spectacular. We learned from our guide of the feuding family members who would have walled compounds from their next door neighbors with whom they had generation-long feuds. Today these homes have been beautifully renovated by wealthy Italians. This was my favorite place to visit during our trip, although the effects of tourism are alive and well. San Gimignano is a small town with a pair of linked, central squares and is crawling with people and

shopping. The views and history, however, are compelling.

We bid goodbye to our guide and headed back to Florence. That evening we decided to attempt to find the restaurant highly recommended by Gabriella. Just like home, ask the locals where to eat. I say attempt, because after nearly an hour of searching for the restaurant just a few blocks from our hotel, we were unsuccessful! Not only could we not find the street on which it was located on any map, the Italian police had no idea where it was either! KT and I figured we had to be close (we had, in fact, been circling it) and decided to make one last attempt at finding it. Magically it appeared tucked away on some obscure, tiny, side street. Upon entering, we knew it was worth the search and the wait. This was the classic, vibrant, little Italian bistro-style neighborhood restaurant loaded with charm (and, oddly enough, many Americans) you might expect to find. The culinary highlight of our trip. Make sure you visit Acqua.al 2 if ever in Florence.

The next morning we made the brief trip to the Florence train station and took an express train back to Roma Termini (the central train station). The weather was questionable, though nothing was falling from the sky, as we arrived at our hotel located on Via Veneto prior to check-in. Venturing a short distance, we sat down for a late breakfast/early lunch prior to our personalized tour of Rome. Once again, we were greeted by the driver of an

E-Class Benz (who did not speak any English) and shortly thereafter, our guide appeared and introduced himself. His first question: "What do you hope to accomplish in the three hours I will be spending with you?" KT quickly responded by asking him to give us the "lay of the land" so that when our time with him was through we were capable of navigating the city like pros. And . . . to see the Pantheon. A rather heady task that he nevertheless seemed up to handling. And handle it he did!

Rome is a city of more than four million people, yet surprisingly easy to get around. Our first stop was the Pantheon, a huge, domed cathedral that today causes architects and engineers to ponder how it was built. Our guide noted there is some conjecture that tons and tons of sand was hauled into the city, mounded, and the structure was built over this mountain of mounded sand, then removed once the structure was completed. Like most of the great buildings of Rome, it is built of brick, then covered with a marble veneer. This building was rebuilt in its present form between 118 and 125 A.D. Talk about old! Today many of the buildings or ruins of these buildings are stripped of their marble exteriors. Our guide explained that after the fall of the Empire, Rome was a very poor city of less than 100,000 people, and marble became an expensive commodity to be sold or reused elsewhere. How did they ever move this stuff, let alone quarry it from the earth?

We continued on our drive with the guide pointing out various monuments and buildings and their significance both yesterday and today. Our first stop was at The Forum. The Forum, in its day, was a chaotic place. It offered food stalls, temples and brothels, in addition to being the home of the Senate. Once again, here are these huge structures built of brick and stripped of marble. The



remnants of the track where chariot races were held and the aqueducts used to carry water to Rome were very evident. The complex was built on a bit of a hillside were you could imagine the crowds of people gathered to view an event. During Cesar's day the belief was held that if one entertained the peasants they would less likely revolt against the aristocracy. I guess that only works for so long.



The ruins and monuments are literally everywhere you go. Our guide noted that Rome is filled with monuments we don't see in addition to those that are obvious. Why you ask? Every time a new building is built or excavation in the city takes place, more things are found. The city of Rome has been "filled in" over time and many of the great

buildings and monuments were covered over. We became especially aware of this in the remaining time we spent walking around Rome.

We passed the famous Coliseum (once again built to entertain the masses as well as the wealthy); however, due to the long lines we did not venture inside. One of the more interesting things we saw was the Monumento a Vittorio Emanuele II, built between 1885 and 1911 to honor the first king of unified Italy. Our guide referred to it as the “wedding cake statue.” Hard to believe, but this monstrosity is a monument, not a building. There is nothing inside to speak of other than the infrastructure to hold it up! Pretty impressive. We called it a day with our guide and felt we were able to make our way around Rome in pretty good fashion. The rest of the day was spent walking around and getting to know the city better.

Our final day in Rome began with a look out the window only to find plenty of rain falling. When in Rome, well . . . you know the rest. Out came the umbrellas and we were off on another walk around the city. Our first stop was the Vatican City, apparently a stop for many others too. Despite the weather, the place was packed. I could only conjecture that there was some sort of event taking place as only Italian was being spoken. All the while a rather “Pope-like” voice was speaking, people were displaying banners, yelling loudly, cheering and blowing air horns. Man, are you Catholics rowdy! I thought we were at some sort of sporting event! We lost

14 count of just how much time was spent “hoofing it,” but we did take an afternoon lunch break in a little café near the Coliseum. What was on the TV? Formula One racing, of course. In fact, F1 racing was on the television everywhere we went that day. Europe is obsessed with F1 racing like we are football. Both Ferrari and Michael Schumacher are the equivalent of Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods here in the States.

And while we are on the subject of cars, no car nut’s trip would be complete without some comment on the automobiles. Coming soon to the U.S. is the Smart Car.

11. *Keep in mind that this is a monument! Nothing is going on inside the Monumento a Vittorio Emanuele II. Our guide referred to this as the wedding cake statue.*

12. *KT’s next car, the Smart Car.*
13. *Right across the street from our hotel in Rome and it took me a day and half to discover a Lamborghini dealership!*
14. *Everywhere you look in Rome there are ruins from the Roman Empire (notice how it is below today’s street level.)*



17 They are everywhere you go in Italy due to the narrow streets, limited parking, and high price of gas. I would term it a personal transport and a huge step-

up from the scooters that litter the streets of Italy. Built by Daimler-Chrysler, they feature brightly colored changeable exterior panels. The other car “highlight” was one of the last events of our trip. On our final walk back to our hotel at the end of the day, just one block from our hotel, was Bentley Roma. Sitting in the showroom was the new Continental GT, either the sexiest Bentley in recent memory or the world’s most expensive Volkswagen (VW owns Bentley). This car is so exclusive, TV’s Ozzy Ozbourne had to get on the year-plus waiting list for one! And, right across from our hotel was the showroom for Lamborghini Roma. How did it take me a day and a half to discover this? In the showroom sat a black Gallardo and charcoal gray Murcielago. Ouch! Those are some seriously expensive toys! Once back at the hotel, we called it a day and walked just a few blocks to a restaurant to enjoy a quiet meal before turning in. The next morning we were taken to the Rome airport to board our return flight to the U.S. and a seven-hour trip home.

All-in-all, a whirlwind, but great trip to Rome. Only one regret. I wish I would have bought a pedometer to measure just how far we walked. I think even we would have been surprised by the number of miles we traveled on foot.

15. *This is one of my favorite photos from the trip of an outdoor fruit market in Rome.*
16. *The street scene on Via Veneto in front of our hotel, the Alexandria, in Rome.*
17. *You saw KT’s next car, here’s mine (I wish). Bentley of Rome just a block from our hotel.*

bits & pieces

I think that once and for all, my mailing list is purged of demons. Hopefully, you are all receiving your newsletter in a timely manner (nothing like spending twice as much on postage to send it first class and solve the delivery problem). I must admit, however, that the last newsletter prompted fewer phone calls and emails than any previous issue. Curious am I? Was the content responsible, or, in fact, are the mailing demons not yet purged? I need your feedback, good, bad or otherwise.

Some months back I told you about the Pottery Barn Design Library. Volume II of the series is out and it features three books' "**Dining Spaces,**" "**Work Spaces,**" and "**Storage and Display.**" Don't waste your money.

Here are two books, however, worth wasting your money on. I really like most all the books from Taunton Press and "**Good House Parts**" by Dennis Wedlick (ISBN 1-56158-628-5) at \$34.95 is one of my favorites. A must-have for those doing a remodel or building new. Great ideas, beautifully photographed and presented.

Ditto for "**Better Homes and Gardens Home Building Idea File**" (ISBN 0-696-21766-X), \$19.95. Bob and Karen Collins turned me on to this one and I got it at Home Depot (of all places). It is a collection of homes from all over the United States. Unlike homes featured in most design books, these are livable, believable homes just like you and I might have, as opposed to the typical perfect designer model homes. In fact, the review on the back page describes it as Real Homes, Real Strategies, Real Inspiration. Nuff said.

While we are on the subject of good reading, there is yet another new magazine for house freaks. Check out Old House Journal's "**New Old House**" magazine. The premier issue is on newsstands now. I received a gratis copy as a subscriber to both Old

House Journal and Old House Interiors and highly recommend this magazine. It is an excellent companion to their existing publications and a must-have for the person who desires the charm and character of an old house but has chosen to buy or build new. Check it out at www.newoldhousemag.com.

The Cottage Style or European Country look is quite popular. To add to that look **Jeld-Wen Windows and Doors** has added the Santa Fe line of molded wood fiber interior doors that have the look of a planked solid wood door. Visit www.jed-wen.com/santafe. Very cool.



Paul Malmendier, Lititz metal artisan extraordinaire, has been featured on these pages before (Volume 1 Issue 2 November 2002). Far above and beyond the ramblings of yours truly, Paul is featured in a six-page spread titled "Man of Steel" in the Fall/Winter 2004 Philadelphia Magazine HOME & GARDEN. A nice article with great photos. Check out the newsstand at Barnes & Noble or Border's or visit www.homeandgardeningmag.com. Paul looks very serious in his photo!

Two products to add to the must-have list for those of you who admit to being anal-retentive house cleaners: **Mister Clean Magic Eraser** and the **Chlorox Pen**. Thanks to co-realtor and friend Darlene Fenstermacher, I am digging this Mister Clean Magic Eraser. Get a scuff on the wall, wet the eraser, wring it out, and gently rub the mark on the wall. Gone! Just like it says, it's magic. One problem, you need tons of these things as they don't last very long. I'm not convinced that a wet sponge or cloth with Barkeepers Friend doesn't do the same thing, but for the time being, I'm sold. Larry White, former mayor of Rothsville and now acting-mayor of Tequesta, Florida (just kidding. . . unless of course you know Larry), recommended the Chlorox Pen. Wow! This thing is wild. It looks kind of like a large magic marker and you mark the spot on your clothing and throw it in the wash. I splattered balsamic vinegar on the front of a light yellow polo shirt. I washed it with normal detergent and the spots did not disappear. I threw it in the dryer and assumed the spots were there for life, thus relegating the shirt to the "not to be seen in public wardrobe." A short time later, Larry tells KT and I about the Chlorox Pen. I "marked" the spots with it, threw it back in the wash, and voila, the spots are gone! A good shirt again. Make sure you don't use it on anything but white or light colors. I made that mistake!

Are your laminate counter tops stained? Short of replacing them, try **one part vinegar to ten parts water** which should remove the stains (coffee, beet juice, etc.).

Oops! The last issue featured mission-style cabinetry in the bathroom of Don and Tara Fausnaught. I noted the name of the cabinetmaker incorrectly as George Robert Hall. His name is George Robert Platt and he is located at 116 West Chestnut Street, Ephrata. My apologies to both the Fausnaughts and Mr. Platt.



Recipes Worth Noting

Despite the fact that this is easily the most popular section of the newsletter, this will be the last time (at least for awhile) that I will be blessing you with culinary delights from my personal recipe files. Don't despair, however, beginning with the next issue I will be featuring one of you in your kitchen with recipes from your collection of epicurean treasures. Any volunteers? I have several of you in mind already. Look forward to some great recipes from the kitchens of . . . you!

Crispy Crusted Red Snapper

from *Cuisine at Home Magazine*

This one is a keeper! I didn't have red snapper, so I used tilapia fillets (from COSTCO of all places). This is another one of those that makes you look like a better cook than you are. I suspect you could substitute most any kind of chips or crackers in lieu of the potato chips.

- 1 cup tomato, seeded, chopped
- 1 cup leeks, thinly sliced
- ½ cup green bell pepper, chopped
- 1 Tablespoon garlic minced
- 4 red snapper fillets (6 oz. each) boned and skinned
- ½ cup coarse bread crumbs
- ½ cup Parmesan cheese, grated
- ½ cup plain potato chips, crushed
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne
- 2 Tablespoon unsalted butter, melted
- 1 Tablespoon scallion, thinly sliced
- Lemon wedges

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Combine first four ingredients in a bowl. Spread on a baking sheet coated with cooking spray. Arrange fillets on top of vegetable; season with salt and pepper to taste. Combine crumbs and next four ingredients; toss with melted butter. Divide crumb mixture evenly over each fillet, pressure into the fish. Bake 20 minutes, or until fillets flake easily when tested with a fork. Sprinkle with scallions and serve with lemon wedges. Serves four.

Broccoli and Turnips with Horseradish

from *Southern Living*

Suffice it to say, this is a great dish for winter dinners or holiday meals. And easy, too.

- 1 pound fresh turnips, peeled and cut into thin strips
- 1 pound fresh broccoli, cut into florets
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons prepared horseradish
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- ½ tablespoon salt
- 1/4 cup chopped walnuts, toasted

Arrange turnips in a steamer basket over boiling water. Cover and steam 8 minutes. Add broccoli;

cover and steam 5 minutes. Place turnips and broccoli in a large bowl.

Melt butter in a small saucepan over low heat. Cook 5 minutes or until lightly browned. Remove from heat. Stir in horseradish, lemon juice and salt. Pour sauce over vegetables, tossing to coat. Sprinkle with walnuts. Serve immediately.

Peppers Stuffed with Tomatoes and Mozzarella

from the *Williams-Sonoma catalog*

Yet another winner. We have made these time and again. Always a huge hit and you can serve them with anything. In fact, the stuffing is so good you can simply serve it over salad greens.

- 3 red bell peppers

For the stuffing

- 1 ½ teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 ½ Tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- 3/4 lb. cherry tomatoes stemmed and halved
- 1 cup mozzarella cheese cubed
- ½ cup loosely packed fresh basil leaves cut into thin strips (chiffonade)

Cut the peppers in half lengthwise. Remove the seeds and the ribs. Cut a thin slice from the rounded side of each half, if necessary, so that the pepper will sit upright in the baker. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In a large bowl, whisk together olive oil, vinegar, garlic, salt and pepper. Add the tomatoes, mozzarella and basil and mix together. Fill each pepper with the tomato-mozzarella stuffing mix. Place in the oven and bake until peppers are tender, about 40 minutes. Serves four.

Seasonal Greens with Walnuts, Pears and Cranberry Vinaigrette

Thanks to good friends Jim and Cindy Sorrentino for this one. They served it to us once and we asked them to serve it again it was so good. I'm confident you will agree.

Spicy Walnuts

- 1 ½ teaspoons butter, melted
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne
- 1/8 teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- ½ cup coarsely chopped walnuts

Combine all ingredients in a small skillet and toss well to coat. Cook over medium heat until nuts are lightly browned. Remove from heat and let cool, stirring frequently to keep the nuts from sticking together.

Cranberry Vinaigrette

- 2/3 cup fresh or frozen cranberries
- 1/4 cup sugar
- ½ cup white wine or distilled vinegar
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1/4 cup orange juice
- 3/4 cup vegetable oil or very light olive oil
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Place cranberries, sugar, and vinegar in a small saucepan. Cook over medium heat until the cranberries pop, about 4 to 5 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool. Puree the cranberry mixture in a blender. Pour the puree into a medium bowl and whisk in the mustard and orange juice. Gradually whisk in the oil, a little at a time. The dressing should become smooth and emulsified. Season with the salt and pepper. Refrigerate until needed.

Salad

- 8 cups season greens mix
 - 1 large Asian pear or 2 small, cored, and sliced into 1/8 inch wedges (can substitute a firm, crisp, red apple or Bosc pear)
 - ½ small red onion, thinly sliced
- Toss greens, pear and onions with some of the cranberry vinaigrette until well coated. Divide among individual salad plates. Top the salads with spicy walnuts and pass the extra vinaigrette.

The Household WORD

ISSUE 6, JANUARY '05

A Newsletter about homes, you...and Bill

*“May your house
always be too
small to hold all
your friends.”*



106 Luxury Condominium homes by Garman Builders, Inc., in a pastoral setting in Ephrata Township. Seven models to choose from, including first floor owner's suites, two-car garages, gas heating and full basements. Priced from the low \$200,000's.

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