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Tune in to Jeffrey's podcast, *Financial Focus*, by visiting **http://financialconceptsmesquite.com/podcast/**

Black Bean and Corn Salad

INGREDIENTS

- ⅓ cup fresh lime juice
- ½ cup olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cayenne pepper
- 2 (15 ounce) cans black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1½ cups frozen corn kernels
- 1 avocado - peeled, pitted and diced
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 6 green onions, thinly sliced
- ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro (Optional)

DIRECTIONS

Step 1
Place lime juice, olive oil, garlic, salt, and cayenne pepper in a small jar. Cover with lid, and shake until ingredients are well mixed.

Step 2
In a salad bowl, combine beans, corn, avocado, bell pepper, tomatoes, green onions, and cilantro. Shake lime dressing, and pour it over the salad. Stir salad to coat vegetables and beans with dressing, and serve.

Prep: 25 mins
Total: 25 mins
Servings: 6

https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/13933/black-bean-and-corn-salad-ii/

Jeffrey Bird-RICP®

Financial *Focus*

A Monthly Insight Into Your Finances

March 2021

How To Get Over Retirement Fears

As it's depicted in popular culture and advertising, looking ahead to retirement is a time of great excitement and optimism. After all, if you're in your 60s, you've likely been going to work every day for 40 years or more. So, retirement means you can spend your time doing the things you've always wanted to do.

While that depiction of retirement is in many ways true, it's also true that those final years and months before retirement can be a source of anxiety for many people. The ads tell us they're living the good life, but they don't show how much sweat, work, and worry went into reaching that picture-perfect retirement.

Continued on next page…

National Cereal Day March 7

In 1964, General Mills management issued a challenge to all employees to create a unique cereal using the same manufacturing technology from their two best-selling cereals at the time: Cheerios and Wheaties. Product developer John Holahan was struck with inspiration upon his next trip to the grocery store. He decided to chop up pieces of marshmallow circus peanuts and mix them in with Cheerios. Not only did the executives love it, but given that it was the 1960s, their marketing team thought to take advantage of the popularity of charm bracelets among kids and teens.

https://listverse.com/2019/03/04/10-cereals-with-strange-and-interest-

HOW TO...

Getting yourself to the retirement you've always wanted does take a lot of work and there are going to be moments of doubt and worry. But here's the thing: Doubt and worry are both perfectly natural. Here are a few of the common fears that were highlighted in a recent article.[1]

The first common financial retirement fear is simply running out of money. Now, on the surface, that sounds obvious, and to a degree it is. But it's not easy to determine how much money you're likely to need in retirement with any real certainty.

One good way to address this fear is to work with an experienced financial services professional who can calmly and confidently address your concerns and questions. A financial services professional may be well positioned to help you add more certainty to determining how much money you'll likely need once you've left the workforce.

In addition, a software program can help you make calculations and show you how much you need to be saving as you progress toward retirement. Perhaps most importantly, a software program may help you find places you can comfortably reduce your expenses after retirement to make it more likely that your money sees you through.

A second fear that you can overcome on your journey is the fear of inflation cutting into your nest egg. It's true that because of inflation the money you've saved for retirement doesn't have as much purchasing power.[1] And if inflation were to go up rapidly, for whatever reason, it could imperil your preferred retirement lifestyle. Those changes could be small, like not being able to eat out or travel as often, or they could be more significant, depending on how much you have saved.

Finally, concerns about high healthcare costs are very common. It's no revelation to say that healthcare is expensive, and there's no reason to believe that it won't just keep getting more expensive. So that leaves a lot of near-retirees sweating the details of their own coverage.
But there are things you can do to help you prepare. One option may be opening a health savings account, which is more commonly referred to as an HSA. Not only will this kind of account help you cover medical costs, but it may also provide general tax savings.

You should note, however, that once you turn 65 and enroll in Medicare, you'll no longer be able to fund an HSA.[1]

You want the months and years leading into retirement to be a time of excitement, not a time of worry. Working with a financial services professional to help you identify ways to build on your retirement strategy may help.

1 https://money.usnews.com/money/retirement/aging/articles/common-retirement-financialfears-and-how-to-overcome-them

Five Tips to Regain Your Retirement Savings Focus in 2021

In early 2020, 61% of U.S. workers surveyed said that retirement planning makes them feel stressed.[1] Investor confidence was continually tested as the year wore on, and it's likely that this percentage rose — perhaps even substantially. If you find yourself among those feeling stressed heading into the new year, these tips may help you focus and enhance your retirement savings strategy in 2021.

1. **Consider increasing your savings by just 1%.** If you participate in a retirement savings plan at work, commit to increasing your contribution rate by just 1%, and then try to increase it again whenever possible until you reach the maximum amount allowed. The chart below illustrates the powerful difference contributing just 1% more each year can make over time.

The Power of 1%

Maria and Nick are hired at the same time at a $50,000 annual salary. Both contribute 6% of their salaries to their retirement accounts and receive a 3% raise each year. Nick maintains the 6% rate throughout his career, while Maria increases her rate by 1% each year until she hits 15%. After 30 years, Maria would have accumulated more than double the amount that Nick has.

Assumes a 6% average annual rate of return. This hypothetical example of mathematical compounding is used for illustrative purposes only and does not represent the performance of any specific investment. It assumes monthly contributions and monthly compounding. Fees, expenses, and taxes were not considered and would reduce the performance shown if included. Actual results will vary.

2. **Review your tax situation.** It makes sense to review your retirement savings strategy periodically in light of your current tax situ-ation. That's because retirement savings plans and IRAs not only help you accumulate savings for the future, they can help lower your income taxes now.

   Every dollar you contribute to a traditional (non-Roth) retirement savings plan at work reduces the amount of your current taxable income. If neither you nor your spouse is covered by a work-based plan, contributions to a traditional IRA are fully deductible up to annual limits. If you, your spouse, or both of you participate in a work-based plan, your IRA contributions may still be deductible unless your income exceeds certain limits.

   Note that you will have to pay taxes on contributions and earnings eventually, when you withdraw the money. In addition, withdraw-als prior to age 59½ may be subject to a 10% penalty tax, unless an exception applies.

3. **Rebalance, if necessary.** Market turbulence throughout the past year may have caused your target asset allocation to shift toward a more aggressive or conservative profile than is appropriate for your circumstances. If your portfolio is not rebalanced automatically, now might be a good time to see if adjustments need to be made.

   Typically, there are two ways to rebalance: (1) you can do so quickly by selling securities or shares in the overweighted asset class(es) and shifting the proceeds to the underweighted one(s), or (2) you can rebalance gradually by directing new investments into the un-derweighted class(es) until the target allocation is reached. Keep in mind that selling investments in a taxable account could result in a tax liability. Asset allocation is a method used to help manage investment risk; it does not guarantee a profit or protect against invest-ment loss.

4. **Revisit your savings goal.** When you first started saving in your retirement plan or IRA, you may have estimated how much you might need to accumulate to retire comfortably. If you experienced any major life changes during the past year — for example, a change in job or marital status, an inheritance, or a new family member — you may want to take a fresh look at your overall savings goal as well as the assumptions used to generate it. As circumstances in your life change, your savings strategy will likely evolve as well.

5. **Understand all your plan's features.** Work-based retirement savings plans can vary from employer to employer. How familiar are you with your plan's specific features? Does your employer offer a matching and/or profit-sharing contribution? Do you know how it works? Are company contributions and earnings subject to a vesting schedule (i.e., a waiting period before they become fully yours) and, if so, do you understand the parameters? Does your plan offer loans or hardship withdrawals? Under what circumstances might you access the money? Can you make Roth or after-tax contributions, which can provide a source of tax-free income in retirement?Review your plan's Summary Plan Description to ensure you take maximum advantage of all that your plan has to offer.

All investing involves risk, including the possible loss of principal, and there is no guarantee that any investment strategy will be successful.
1) Employee Benefit Research Institute, 2020