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Feta-Brined Chicken Sandwich

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 pound feta, crumbled, plus 3/4 cup of the brine
- 1 tablespoon Louisiana-style hot sauce, preferably Tabasco
- Four 4-ounce chicken cutlets
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for brushing
- Kosher salt
- Pepper
- Four 6-inch ciabatta rolls, split and toasted
- Arugula (not baby), sliced cucumber, red onion and seeded piquillo peppers, for serving

DIRECTIONS

Step 1
In a large resealable plastic bag, mix the feta brine and hot sauce. Add the chicken cutlets, seal the bag and turn to coat. Refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Step 2
Meanwhile, in a food processor, pulse the feta cheese and lemon juice. Slowly blend in the 1/3 cup of oil until smooth. Season with salt and pepper.

Step 3
Preheat a grill pan. Remove the chicken from the brine and pat dry; discard the brine. Brush with oil and season with salt and pepper. Grill the cutlets over moderately high heat, turning once, until cooked through, about 5 minutes total.

Step 4
Spread the rolls with some of the feta. Top with the chicken, arugula, cucumber, onion and peppers and serve.

https://www.foodandwine.com/recipes/feta-brined-chicken-sandwiches

Jeffrey Bird-RICP®

Financial Focus

A Monthly Insight Into Your Finances

April 2021

Retirement Advice for Those Nowhere Near Retirement

It's valuable to share insights and information with everyone who is on their journey to retirement — but it can be easy to focus more on those who are closer to retirement instead of earlier in their careers.

So, here's a look at some financial advice for younger workers. It's especially valuable to help younger people avoid some of the financial mistakes that some of their elders made on their own financial journeys.

For many people, thinking back to their younger years and the financial decisions they made then is about enough to make them try to invent a time machine. Until time travel comes around, good old-fashioned education is the next best thing. A recent article[1] does a great job of providing some of those tips.

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Mozart the Prankster

Apparently, Mozart had an extreme dislike for the soprano opera singer Adriana Ferrarese del Bene. She had a strange tendency to drop her chin and throw back her head while singing low and high notes respectively, and knowing this, Mozart chose to fill her showpiece aria ("Come scoglio") with constant harmonic leaps. Presumably he took great pleasure in watching her bob her head "like a chicken".

https://www.operaomaha.org/blog/did-you-know-cosi-fan-tutte-edition

RETIREMENT ADVICE...

The first piece of advice is to learn self-control. When we're kids, most of us learn self-control in terms of when we talk in class, how many cookies we can eat when they first come out of the oven, and when we go to bed. But it's just as important to learn financial self-control.

Self-control is even more important when we start to work full-time and make more money than we ever had previously. When we get older and are making a regular salary, we have to learn instant gratification can get us in trouble if we start buying whatever we want with credit cards.

Saving up for the latest PlayStation, rather than putting it on plastic, is going to be so helpful in the long run. Remember, if putting gadgets, jeans, and sushi on credit cards becomes a habit, you could end up paying for those things for many years into the future.

The article does note, of course, that credit cards are a financial tool most people have to use, at least from time to time.[1] And you can also be strategic about how you use them. For example, select a card that has good and achievable rewards, perhaps frequent flyer miles or cash back.

Then, always pay your balance in full when the bill hits in your inbox. Also, don't carry more cards than you can keep track of or pay off each month.

Not relying too heavily on credit cards is such a valuable financial life lesson. Credit cards are valuable tools for emergency situations and can also help you build credit, but it's so crucial to not to abuse them.

The next thing that benefits young people on their journey to retirement is to know where their money is going. It sounds like a simple thing, but it's essential. If you stop every morning on the way to work for a bagel or coffee you might not really notice the daily expense. In a way, your mind can play tricks on you. Every morning when you're in line for your coffee and bagel, you tell yourself, "Hey, it's only $6." But your mind isn't factoring yesterday's $6 and tomorrow's $6.

Finally, no matter where you are in life or on your journey to retirement, it's important to have an emergency fund.[1] With factors including credit card debt, student loan debt, an entry-level salary, it can be difficult to build an emergency fund. But it's still important to save money, even if it's only a few bucks.

The decisions you make when you're young can have a lasting impact on your retirement strategy. By starting to make good decisions early on, you'll position yourself well for everything that's yet to come on your journey.

1 https://www.investopedia.com/articles/younginvestors/08/eight-tips.asp

Gift vs. Inheritance: Consider the Tax Difference

Most people do not pay income tax on assets they inherit, but if they later sell inherited assets such as appreciated securities and real estate, they may owe tax on the capital gains. The capital gain or loss is the difference between the selling price and the asset's basis.

Thus, the basis can be an important factor when deciding whether you should gift assets now or transfer them to heirs at your death

Capital Gains Taxes

Capital gains and losses are classified as short term or long term, depending on how long you own the asset. A holding period of one year or less is short term; more than one year is long term. Inherited property is considered long term regardless of how long you own it. Short-term capital gains are taxed as ordinary income, whereas long-term gains are taxed at rates ranging from 0% to 20%, depending on taxable income.

2021 taxable income thresholds for long-term capital gains

Tax Rate	Single Filer	Married joint
0%	Up to $40,400	Up to $80,800
15%	$40,401 to $445,850	$80,801 to $501,600
20%	More than $445,850	More than $501,600

Because capital gains are included in net investment income, some taxpayers may also be subject to the 3.8% net investment income tax if their modified adjusted gross income exceeds $200,000 (single filers) or $250,000 (joint filers). Gains from certain assets, including coins, art, and other collectibles, may be taxed at higher rates.

What's the Basis?

Your basis in an asset is generally equal to the purchase price plus associated expenses (such as taxes and commissions on the transaction). Basis in real property may be adjusted upward for the cost of capital improvements or downward for depreciation taken for tax purposes and insurance reimbursements for casualty losses or theft.

If you are thinking about giving highly appreciated assets to your children, keep in mind that your basis will carry over with the gift. Let's say you bought shares of an investment for $50,000 (your basis) 20 years ago and they are worth $150,000 today. You would realize a capital gain of about $100,000 if you were to sell the shares.

If you give the shares to your children during your lifetime, they would keep the same $50,000 basis. When your children sell the shares, they could face substantial capital gains taxes — for the gains during your lifetime plus any additional gains that occur after they receive the gift.

However, if you leave the assets to your children in your estate, their basis will step up to the value at the time of your death. Your heirs would be liable only for taxes on any capital gains above the stepped-up basis, effectively erasing all capital gains that occurred during your lifetime.

Gift Tax and Other Factors

In addition to the potential for a stepped-up basis on inherited assets, you might consider the following when deciding whether to gift highly appreciated assets to your children or other family members.

Will making gifts reduce your combined gift and estate taxes? Gifted property is removed from your gross estate for federal estate tax purposes. A 40% tax rate applies to taxable estate assets exceeding the lifetime estate and gift tax exclusion ($11.7 million for individuals and $23.4 million for married couples in 2021; indexed annually for inflation). This high threshold could fall if the government needs to raise tax revenues in the future. Any gift over the annual exclusion amount ($15,000 for individual gifts or $30,000 for joint gifts) must be reported on a gift tax return, and it decreases the lifetime exclusion.

Does the recipient need the gift now, or can it wait? Could you gift cash or other property that would not trigger capital gains tax instead?

What tax rate might apply to capital gains on the sale of the asset? For example, if you or the recipient would pay a 0% rate on capital gains, there may be no benefit to waiting for a step-up in basis. On the other hand, if the recipient would be subject to a higher tax rate, you could gift the asset or sell it yourself and gift the cash proceeds.