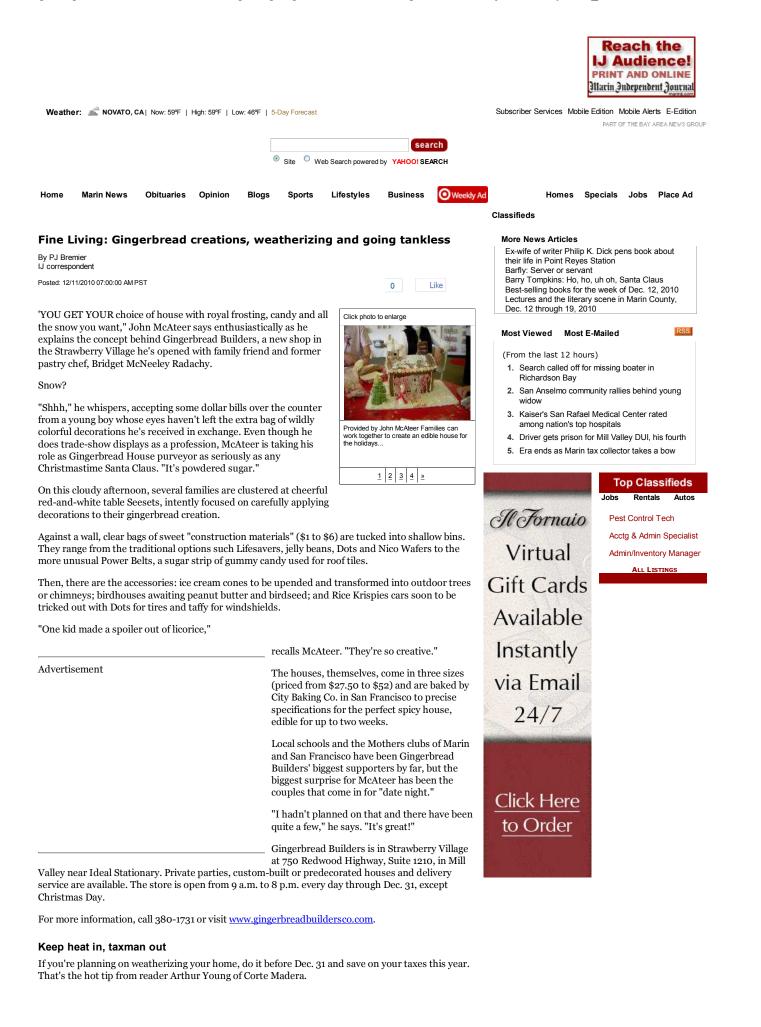
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In just a few weeks, he writes, "the IRS's tax credit of 30 percent -- not a refund, but an automatic tax deduction -- disappears. It means free money for energy-efficiency conscious Marinites. It means up to \$1,500 straight off your bottom-line tax bill."

That's true, says IRS spokesman Jesse Weller. The Nonbusiness Energy Property Credit equals 30 percent of what a homeowner spends on eligible energy-saving improvements, up to a maximum tax credit of \$1,500 for the combined 2009 and 2010 tax years.

These improvements include certain high-efficiency heating and air-conditioning systems, water heaters and stoves that burn biomass (fuel that includes wood, wood waste or residues such as wood pellets, certain crops and plants) and the labor costs involved for installing them.

Energy-efficient windows, skylights and doors, qualifying insulation and certain roofs also qualify for the credit but not the labor costs to install them.

Make sure the improvements are eligible before purchasing, though. According to the IRS, a homeowner can normally rely on the manufacturer's tax credit certification statement usually found on the manufacturer's website or with the product packaging.

This certification is different from the Department of Energy's Energy Star label, and not all Energy Star labeled products qualify for the tax credits. Although, Weller says the IRS does not list qualifying energy property, the Department of Energy does online under the link "Tax Credits for Energy Efficiency" at www.energystar.gov.

All you need to claim the credit is to complete Form 5695 Residential Energy Credits with your tax return, he says.

"Keep records, receipts, and manufacturers certification statement with your tax records in case you're asked to support the claim in the future," Weller says.

For more information, visit the Energy Incentives for Individuals in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act site at <u>www.irs.gov</u>.

Tankless in Marin

Thanks to Arthur Young for this tip, too. Check out tankless water heaters; he says they can last twice as long as conventional tank water heaters, save up to 50 percent on hot water gas, free up space and give endless hot water.

He's right, says David Shevick, owner of Tanknot, a tankless hot water heater company in San Rafael, and "you'll also lower your carbon footprint."

If you install one before the end of the month, he says, you can take advantage of the expiring tax credit as all of the ones he sells are eligible. (Tanknot installations range from \$2,700 to \$3,500 including labor.)

"The most important thing about installing a tankless water heater is where you put it," he insists. "Keep it close to the fixtures. That affects the hot water delay."

For example, on a ranch-style house where a tank water heater could be in the garage by the kitchen, Shevick might put a tankless hot water heater outside the bedroom wing, near the bath fixtures, and pipe the hot water back to the kitchen.

Homeowners can calculate their own savings with a tankless hot water heater by clicking on the Tankless Calculator icon at <u>www.tanknot.com</u>. For more information, call 794-2084.

PJ Bremier writes on home, garden, design and entertaining topics every Saturday and also on her blog at <u>DesignSwirl.net</u>. She may be contacted at P.O. Box 412, Kentfield, CA 94914, or at <u>pi@mindspring.com</u>.



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