

After a choppy October, November was a very good month for stocks. Falling oil prices, new moves by central banks, and solid domestic fundamentals gave both the Dow and the S&P 500 new record highs. For the month, the S&P 500 gained 4.29%, the Dow grew 5.03%, and the Nasdaq added 5.33%.<sup>1</sup> Last week was packed with economic data and despite the shortened trading week, stocks managed a win. For the week, the S&P 500 edged up 0.20%, the Dow added 0.10%, and the Nasdaq grew 1.67%.

The second Gross Domestic Product estimate came out Tuesday and showed revised growth of 3.9% in the third quarter, significantly higher than the original 3.5% estimate. The second release is based on more complete data and reflects increased growth in multiple sectors of the economy.<sup>2</sup> This is good news for the fourth quarter if the growth can be maintained.

The critical holiday shopping season kicked off with a bang, with retailers starting their Black Friday deals as early as Wednesday or Thursday. Early estimates suggest that 55% of consumers shopped online or in stores over the Thanksgiving weekend and spent an average of \$380.95 per person.<sup>3</sup>

Since the holiday season accounts for about 20% of total 2014 retail business, retailers are understandably anxious to keep the ball rolling. The CEO of Macy's, one of the nation's largest retailers, is cautiously optimistic about the holiday season as consumers take advantage of a burlier economy to unleash pent-up demand.<sup>4</sup> Can the strong retail trend continue? Let's take a look at some of the factors that may affect holiday shopping:

Petroleum prices are still falling precipitously; last week, crude oil fell to its lowest price since 2009 when the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Nations (OPEC) declined to cut production.<sup>5</sup> In a few short months, oil has fallen from \$100/barrel to \$70/barrel, and it doesn't appear that we've seen the bottom yet.<sup>6</sup> Gas prices have followed oil, and a nationwide drop in gas prices are leaving consumers with more money at the holidays.

Consumer confidence, an indicator of how optimistic Americans are about their current and future financial prospects, reached its highest level in seven years as low gas prices and a strong job market boosted spirits.<sup>7</sup> Though the correlation isn't perfect, confidence readings are often seen as a gauge of future spending.

The latest data shows that consumer spending rebounded modestly in October after falling in September. However, the October data may not yet show the effects of the steep decline in gas prices, meaning we may see a bigger jump in November.<sup>8</sup> All told, the fundamentals are in place for a strong holiday shopping season, which will hopefully spur additional economic growth.

## ECONOMIC CALENDAR:

**Monday:** PMI Manufacturing Index, ISM Mfg. Index

**Tuesday:** Motor Vehicle Sales, Construction Spending

**Wednesday:** ADP Employment Report, Productivity and Costs, ISM Non-Mfg. Index, EIA Petroleum Status Report, Beige Book

**Thursday:** Jobless Claims

**Friday:** Employment Situation, International Trade, Factory Orders

Data as of 11/28/2014	1-Week	Since 1/1/14	1-Year	5-Year	10-Year
Standard & Poor's 500	0.20%	11.86%	14.40%	17.89%	7.48%
DOW	0.10%	7.55%	10.75%	14.58%	6.94%
NASDAQ	1.67%	14.73%	18.47%	24.81%	12.80%
U.S. Corporate Bond Index	0.96%	4.11%	3.72%	1.96%	1.01%
International	0.47%	-3.96%	-2.60%	3.36%	2.39%
Data as 11/28/2014	1 mo.	6 mo.	1 yr.	5 yr.	10 yr.
Treasury Yields (CMT)	0.04%	0.07%	0.13%	1.49%	2.18%

Notes: All index returns exclude reinvested dividends, and the 5-year and 10-year returns are annualized. Sources: Yahoo! Finance and Treasury.gov. International performance is represented by the MSCI EAFE Index. Corporate bond performance is represented by the DJCBP. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Indices are unmanaged and cannot be invested into directly.

## HEADLINES:

**Durable goods orders mixed in October.** Orders for long-lasting manufactured goods increased unexpectedly in October following two months of decline. However, core goods, which exclude volatile transportation orders, actually fell 1.3%, indicating that companies are uncertain about growth next year.<sup>9</sup>

**New homes sales slow.** Sales of new homes edged up in October, but the slow pace of growth underlines how slow housing demand is. Taken together with last week's existing home sales, analysts believe that the sector is moving into a more stable growth phase.<sup>10</sup>

**Jobless claims reach near three-month high.** After weeks of improvement, weekly claims for new unemployment benefits reached the highest level since early September. Though weekly results are volatile, the number could indicate that businesses are cooling off their hiring near the end of the year.<sup>11</sup>

**Energy sector hit by low petroleum prices.** The recent decline in oil prices has hit energy producers hard, particularly shale extractors whose margins depend on higher oil prices. Continued softness in oil prices could cause significant consolidation in 2015.<sup>12</sup>

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK



*“Use your gifts faithfully, and they shall be enlarged; practice what you know, and you shall attain to higher knowledge.”*

– Matthew Arnold

## RECIPE OF THE WEEK



### Potato, Pea, and Pesto Fish Packets



#### Ingredients:

2 small red or Yukon Gold potatoes, very thinly sliced  
4 6-ounce pieces boneless, skinless cod, salmon, or bass  
1 cup frozen peas  
1/4 cup olive oil  
Kosher salt and black pepper  
1/4 cup pesto

#### Directions:

1. Heat oven to 425° F. Place the potatoes in a single layer on 4 11-by-15-inch pieces of parchment, dividing evenly. Top with the fish, peas, oil, 1 teaspoon salt, and 1/2 teaspoon pepper. Fold the parchment over the fish, then seal each packet by folding the edges over twice.

2. Transfer the packets to a baking sheet. Bake until the fish is opaque throughout, 12 to 14 minutes.
3. Transfer the packets to plates and use scissors to make a small X in the top of each packet. Tear open carefully (they will probably release steam) and top with the pesto.

Recipe adapted from Chris Morocco | RealSimple.com<sup>13</sup>



### **Don't Depend on Tax Refund Timing**

The holiday shopping season is officially underway and you may want to take advantage of great deals on expensive items. However, if you plan on making major purchases on credit this holiday season, don't rely on having your tax refund in hand before your credit card bills arrive. Many factors can affect the timing of your tax refund, especially if you have a complex tax situation. Though the IRS issues most refunds within 21 days of receiving a return, extra reviews or requests for more documentation can delay this process.

For more information on preparing tax returns or shortening your refund time, please contact a qualified tax professional.

Tip courtesy of IRS.gov<sup>14</sup>



### **Keep The Ball Rolling For Better Control**

Instead of aiming for maximum distance and getting the ball close to the hole on your chips, try aiming for maximum roll. You have much more control over the golf ball when it's rolling versus when it's airborne. This is because you don't have to worry about things like where the ball will land, how much backspin it will have, and how the slope and lie of the green will affect its movement. To improve your control over the ball, practice hitting low chips that roll toward the hole instead of flying.

Tip courtesy of Jeff Johnson, PGA | Golf Tips Mag<sup>15</sup>



## Lower Your Risk of Arthritis

Arthritis is a painful category of conditions that are not yet completely understood. However, recent research has shown that there are a few things we can do to prevent arthritis and reduce its symptoms:

- Eat more cherries. Cherries have powerful antioxidants and painkilling agents called anthocyanins that have been shown to lower the risk of gout and painful arthritis flare-ups.
- Stop drinking sodas. Sugary drinks can contribute to weight gain (and joint strain) and have been shown to increase the progression of knee osteoarthritis in men.
- Avoid high-purine foods like red meat, oily fish, and certain vegetables. Eating these foods in excess can lead to increase gout flare-ups.
- Strengthen your joints with exercise, stretching, and mobility work.

Tip courtesy of AARP<sup>16</sup>

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*We love being introduced!*

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Investing involves risk including the potential loss of principal. No investment strategy can guarantee a profit or protect against loss in periods of declining values.

Diversification does not guarantee profit nor is it guaranteed to protect assets

The Standard & Poor's 500 (S&P 500) is an unmanaged group of securities considered to be representative of the stock market in general.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average is a price-weighted average of 30 significant stocks traded on the New York Stock Exchange and the NASDAQ. The DJIA was invented by Charles Dow back in 1896.

The Nasdaq Composite is an index of the common stocks and similar securities listed on the NASDAQ stock market and is considered a broad indicator of the performance of stocks of technology companies and growth companies.

The MSCI EAFE Index was created by Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI) that serves as a benchmark of the performance in major international equity markets as represented by 21 major MSCI indexes from Europe, Australia and Southeast Asia.

The Dow Jones Corporate Bond Index is a 96-bond index designed to represent the market performance, on a total-return basis, of investment-grade bonds issued by leading U.S. companies. Bonds are equally weighted by maturity cell, industry sector, and the overall index.

The S&P/Case-Shiller Home Price Indices are the leading measures of U.S. residential real estate prices, tracking changes in the value of residential real estate. The index is made up of measures of real estate prices in 20 cities and weighted to produce the index.

The 10-year Treasury Note represents debt owed by the United States Treasury to the public. Since the U.S. Government is seen as a risk-free borrower, investors use the 10-year Treasury Note as a benchmark for the long-term bond market.

Google Finance is the source for any reference to the performance of an index between two specific periods.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://goo.gl/dehmNo>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bea.gov/newsreleases/national/gdp/gdpnewsrelease.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <https://nrf.com/media/press-releases/early-promotions-online-shopping-and-improving-economy-changing-the-face-of>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/id/102223845?trknav=homestack:topnews:8>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/11/29/opec-keeps-oil-output-steady-despite-falling-prices/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2014/11/28/a-simple-guide-to-the-sudden-collapse-in-oil-prices/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-11-26/consumer-sentiment-in-u-s-rises-to-highest-in-seven-years-1-.html>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.foxbusiness.com/industries/2014/11/26/consumer-spending-rebounds-income-rises-modestly/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.businessinsider.com/durable-goods-orders-oct-2014-2014-11>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.forbes.com/sites/erincarlyle/2014/11/26/new-home-sales-sluggish-in-october-0-7-increase-reflects-new-normal/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-11-26/jobless-claims-in-u-s-increase-to-almost-three-month-high.html>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/29/us-markets-stocks-usa-weekahead-idUSKCN0JC1ZF20141129>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.realsimple.com/food-recipes/browse-all-recipes/potato-pea-pesto-fish-packets>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.irs.gov/uac/Newsroom/IRS-Offers-Tax-Tips-for-%E2%80%9CThe-Season-of-Giving%E2%80%9D>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.golftipsmag.com/instruction/short-game/lessons/short-game-strokesavers.html>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.aarp.org/health/conditions-treatments/info-03-2013/7-ways-to-prevent-arthritis-photos.html#slide5>