



STIFEL *Bits*

March 18, 2026

The Appetizer

“Burned the roof of my mouth. Still recovering from that.”

– Team Italy baseball player Dominic Canzone after receiving a celebratory **espresso shot** after a home run at the worldwide professional baseball competition.

Now, on to the numbers. Drum roll, please ...

- **2.4%:** The February consumer price index (CPI) **annual inflation rate**.
- **\$19.5 billion:** The expected size of the **U.S. pet grooming industry** in 2026 as the pet wellness trend continues to grow.
- **62%:** The percentage of general-merchandise shopping done in stores by **shoppers ages 18 to 24**, versus 52% for shoppers over 25.
- **83 points:** The number of points scored recently by Miami’s Bam Adebayo, giving him the record for the **second-most** points scored in a single professional basketball game.
- **17:** The age of the youngest player at the worldwide professional baseball competition, **Joseph Contreras**, pitcher for Brazil, who recently faced the USA. After facing Aaron Judge, he has now returned to high school baseball.

Dig In

Strategic Shifts

In case you missed it, we recently gave our [Long-Term Investment Themes](#) a little refresh. We've added two sub-themes to the line-up: "Continental Shift" and "Defense Modernization." With market commentary feeling a bit heavy lately, we wanted to zoom out from the day-to-day noise and highlight something a little more thematic and forward-looking. Think big-picture trends that are shaping the next decade rather than tomorrow.

We're seeing a fascinating reversal of the early 2000s off-shoring trend – it is like American manufacturers are hitting the "undo" button. Thanks to a massive assist from automation and artificial intelligence, U.S. firms are bringing supply chains back to the neighborhood. This **Continental Shift** toward near-shoring is already showing up in the receipts, with global giants signaling roughly **\$1.5 trillion** in multi-year investments to secure domestic production.

Meanwhile, escalating global rivalries are fueling our newest sub-theme, **Defense Modernization**. This isn't just about building bigger planes; it's a fundamental pivot toward "smart" machinery and robotics, which could make up nearly one-third of the U.S. military within **15 years**. This high-tech arms race is global, with **China's military budget** jumping nearly 7% this year to focus on military modernization and developing advanced weapons.

Check out our [full report](#) for the deep dive!

Weekly Specials

Why didn't anyone tell me **(vibe) coding** was easy? It looks like junior engineers just ask AI to do everything – until you see the results. A [CodeRabbit report](#) reviewing 470 pull requests found AI-generated code had 1.7 times more issues than human work. So maybe just "telling AI what to do" isn't quite the move yet.

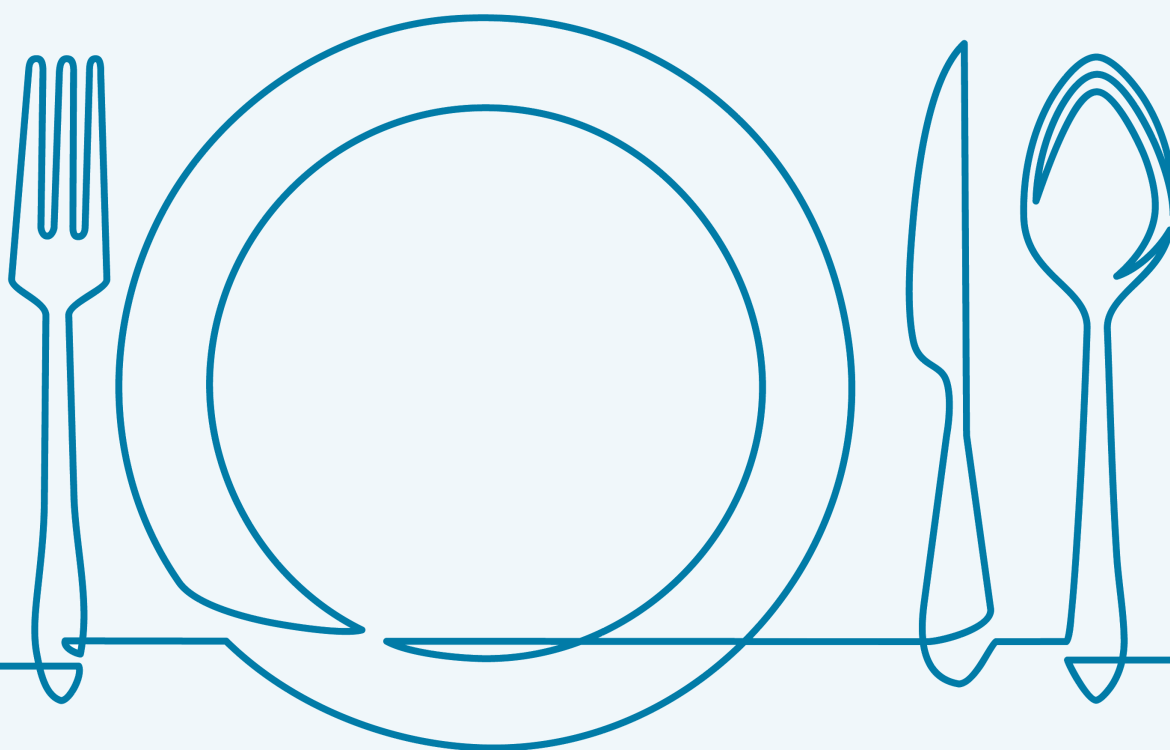
Wife carrying is absolutely a real sport. In the UK's annual Wife Carrying Race, partners sprinted up and down a hill while their wives or girlfriends clung on tight. Most used the "Estonian Hold," where the rider hangs upside down. Honestly, with everything happening lately, a partner-carry contest feels refreshing.

Apparently, people are now getting dumped by AI – or by someone asking AI to write the breakup text. Some Gen Zers admit they let **chatbots handle tough conversations**, emojis included. I can't judge ... I once had AI write a text to my roommate to stop leaving wet laundry in the washer.

Scientists may finally know **why scratching eventually stops the itch**. In mouse studies, researchers identified a skin sensor called TRPV4 that signals when you've scratched enough. Without it, the scratching goes on longer. The finding could help treat chronic itch conditions. Turns out, the body has a built-in "okay, that's enough" button.

Corporate Lunch

- **LEGO** keeps **outpacing the toy industry**. Its secret weapon? Trend-spotting. They're basically running a "fashion season" for toys. And the last few years have delivered: everything from a life-size **Tuxedo Cat** (cat person here) to international grand prix racetracks.
- **Fabletics** the official uniform of "fitness enthusiasts" and "people who work from home" is **launching denim** as remote work declines. Love the confidence, but I'm really hoping this is more Rag & Bone **sweatpants-jean** energy ... because if I'm buying jeans from an athleisure brand, I'm looking for comfort.
- **Nasdaq** is **partnering with Kraken** to pursue 24/7 tokenized stock trading. Congrats, your portfolio may soon ruin your weekend in real time. The "Sunday Scaries" now start on Friday at 4:01 p.m.
- **Eight new emojis** are coming to your group chat this spring! My personal favorite is the "distorted face," which is my reaction when I open my screen-time report. Others include a very useful cartoon "fight cloud" (thanks **Apple**) and a "Sasquatch."
- **Lindt** says **chocolate sales are rising** faster in the U.S. among GLP-1 users, 17% versus 6.5% for non-users in 2025. Looks like the "diet" folks may be hiding their sweet treats in the back of their kitchen drawer.



501 North Broadway | St. Louis, Missouri 63102

Stifel, Nicolaus & Company, Incorporated | Member SIPC & NYSE | [Stifel.com](https://www.stifel.com)

Diversification and asset allocation do not ensure a profit or protect against loss.

Stifel does not provide legal or tax advice. You should consult with your legal or tax advisor regarding your particular situation.

Investing involves risks, including the possible loss of principal invested. Past performance is no guarantee of future results.

Index returns include the reinvestment of dividends but do not include adjustments for brokerage, custodian, and advisory fees. Indices are unmanaged and are not available for direct investment.

This material is for informational purposes only and is not an offer or solicitation to purchase or sell any security or instrument discussed herein.

If you no longer wish to receive these types of communications from Stifel, please reply with a subject line of "unsubscribe." Please note you will still receive electronic communication as it pertains to your account(s).