

Chef's choice

From novice to professional, chefs of any skill can use these kitchen and household products to create and serve gourmet meals

By Lisa Horn, CAS

ARE YOU A master of the microwave or do you delight in creating culinary masterpieces in a professional-grade Viking kitchen? You don't have to cook like Martha Stewart, Rachel Ray or Giada De Laurentiis to enjoy gourmet kitchen and household products. Whether your joy of cooking comes from simple flavors or complex gastronomical experimentations, having the right tools is key. And for advertisers that tap into this need for the right tools, you can find a recipe for success with the tips below.

UNDERSTAND THE EFFECTIVENESS

Why do kitchen and household items make such effective promotional products? "Everyone has a kitchen, and the kitchen tends to be the 'nerve center' of the home, where everyone comes to gather," said Nathan Baine, e-marketing manager for The Magnet Group, Washington, Mo. "Because of their usefulness, kitchen and household items tend to have a universal appeal to a mass audience."

Dan Norris, president of Starline Inc., Grand Island, N.Y., added two more reasons kitchen and household products are successful brand builders. "First, people use these products daily or weekly in the kitchen or around the house. Items such as knife blocks, BBQ sets or cutting boards are often on display with the logo prominently showcased—providing that long-lasting impression advertisers desire," he explained. "Second, some kitchen and household promotional products can be considered 'premium' products—entertaining accessories such as cheese boards, serving trays or wine accessories, for example—ones that people may not necessarily buy for themselves due to cost or because the items are only used once or twice a year. But people love receiving them as gifts."

STANDING OUT

Kitchen and household products can give you options when clients are looking for something out of the ordinary. "Kitchen and household items are outside of the traditional items most people think of in terms of 'promotional,'" said Shannon Colamarino, senior category manager at Leed's, New Kensington, Pa. "However, they can be some of the most impactful promotional products as they carry a wide variety of applications and price points."

One way for household items to be impactful is to be on trend. "For example, current kitchen trends are focused on a stainless steel/black/red mix, so you will see this color combination incorporated into many household promotional products," Colamarino explained. "Also, consumers have begun placing a substantial focus on making their outdoor living spaces (patios, backyard cooking areas, etc.) an extension of their indoor living space. Promotional products such as household items are a great complement to these spaces as well."

(Continued on page 50)

Develop Target Markets

When selling kitchen and household items, it's natural to think about target markets in food-related industries. And while this is an ideal fit, the sales opportunities go far beyond. Industries that do particularly well include:

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| Agriculture companies | Hospitality businesses |
| Bakeries | Hotels |
| Banks | Insurance companies |
| Butchers | Manufacturing firms |
| Casinos | Mortgage brokers |
| Caterers | Real estate agencies |
| Corporations | Restaurants |
| Financial firms | Time-share resorts |
| Grocery stores | Utility companies |
| Health care providers | Vacation rentals |
| Home builders | |

COMFORT AND CARING

Comfort is another consideration when it comes to kitchen and household items. "Comfort is often found in the kitchen so a cookbook, for example, allows you to connect with clients, prospects and employees with something related to this feeling of ease, well being and contentment," explained Roni Wright, MAS, vice president of The Book Company, Delray Beach, Fla.

"Cookbooks also can be a wonderful way to show you care," she continued. "For example, a cookbook specifically written for diabetes or heart health helps educate and inspire making good choices. A health care company recently gave away the new American Heart Association

Cookbook that included a customized promo page with a link to a website for recipients to learn more about the symptoms of a heart attack," she explained. "Since a cookbook is hopefully opened over and over again, it's likely that your thoughtfulness and message will last far beyond the time from when the gift was originally given."

GET INNOVATIVE

Kitchen and household products can be used in very innovative ways. All that's needed is a bit of creativity. Blaine offered an example. "Hotels that offer in-room kitchens would certainly appreciate having items available with their logo on them," he said. "And travel (Continued on page 52)



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agencies can send 'Welcome Home' kitchen items to customers returning from vacations, reminding them to book another trip soon."

Sara Coslett, vice president of Novelty Crystal Corp., Groveland, Fla., offered another creative use of kitchen products. "We've had a distributor sell our top hat ice bucket to a tuxedo manufacturer," she said. "We printed the company's logo on it, filled it with bags of popcorn and drop shipped it to the manufacturer's top 1,000 tuxedo rental companies."

Colamarino provided two more interesting ideas for household items. "We have seen a number of wine openers provided for 'Grand Openings' or even a tongue-in-cheek apology for a coupon glitch with a 'We Screwed Up' theme," she said.

If the above ideas don't suit your clients, try plays on words. "Use 'a cut above' with cutlery, 'slice of the pie' with pie servers and 'here's the scoop' on ice cream scoops," suggested Dan Kielman, vice president of sales for Waverly, Iowa-based American Made Cutlery.

CONSIDER PACKAGING

Depending on the product, some kitchen and household items can become holders or packaging for other related products. "When Starline introduced a silicone oven mitt, we had people using them as gift stockings for the holidays," Norris said. "Based on their gift theme, they stuffed the mitts with other items such as flashlights, food items, pepper mills and ceramic kitchen knives."

Similarly, packaging an item to resemble a city, state or event can be beneficial. "A regional cookbook, a cookbook from a restaurant you enjoyed or a food lover's guide to that city creates a gift that extends the memories of the event," Wright explained.


BUILD CONTINUITY

There is great opportunity for creating continuity programs using kitchen and household items. "By providing complementary items—such as a carving set with a steak knife set or BBQ set, or pepper mills with oven mitts—allow for repeat orders because clients want to collect the full set of products," Norris said.

American Made Cutlery's Kielman mentioned that many end-users give a series of individual items or gift sets throughout five or six years. "It is a great opportunity for all," he said. The recipients love that they are building a collection; buyers have an easier selection process and, of course, distributors appreciate the ease of processing repeat business."

ENTERTAIN THE POSSIBILITIES

Some distributors find selling household products very challenging, according to Colamarino, citing that the category is too narrow. However, this category can actually be one of the most appealing product categories on the market. "When you entertain, the kitchen usually is the central grouping place, which makes it a perfect location to showcase a promotional item," she said. "Plus, the kitchen is one of the most traveled rooms in a person's home, especially during entertaining. This is a great opportunity to focus on this high traffic area and the opportunity it presents. A useful household product with a tasteful logo that people will want to use will get brands noticed."

Hans Kindsgrab, president of Zipline, Green Bay, Wis., summed it up best when he said, "Where there is entertainment, there can be entertaining gifts." 

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SELL IT BETTER

Are you new to selling kitchen and household products or do you simply want to boost sales in this category? Follow these additional sales tips and you'll have a recipe for success.

USE THE PRODUCTS IN YOUR OWN HOUSE.

What better way to learn about the particulars of a product than to test drive it in your own home? "The best way to be an ambassador of a product is to use it yourself," said Shannon Colamarino, senior category manager for Leed's. "Test it out and give it a whirl."

ASK ABOUT CARE INSTRUCTIONS.

"Distributors often ask if there are any special care instructions for the products," mentioned Dan Norris, president of Starline Inc. "We've created easily printable fact sheets that are available on our website and product pages so distributors are armed with the information they and their clients need."

CHECK FOR ITEMS WITH LIFETIME GUARANTEES.

"If a product has a lifetime guarantee, they never wear out," noted Dan Kielman, vice president of sales for American Made Cutlery. "This means a kitchen knife with a logo on the blade, for example, will still be used 20 years from now. This is an amazing advertising value."

CONFIRM ANY SAFETY REGULATIONS.

"Any products that come into contact with food must meet FDA regulations and food-safe criteria so they are approved to be in contact with food or beverages," Colamarino advised.

ASK FOR RECOMMENDATIONS.

As a distributor, it's impossible to know everything about supplier lines, so tap into their expertise to create a program that will get the best results. "It is always easier for us to help distributors if they tell us who the customer is and what goals and objectives they want to accomplish," explained Sara Coslett, vice president of Novelty Crystal Corp. "Oftentimes they call asking for one thing, then when we get more info we can redirect them to a more suitable item they hadn't previously thought of using. We've had people ask for a two-quart candy bowl when all they really need is a one-pint bowl."

CHOOSE QUALITY ITEMS

While price is a consideration in any promotion, it shouldn't be the driving force with kitchen and household items. "A higher-quality kitchen item will last longer and have a greater impact on multiple people," said Nathan Baine, e-marketing manager for The Magnet Group. "If you want to last in the home, you have to buy a quality product."

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