

BUYING & SELLING ENTERTAINING for the HOLIDAYS

A good assortment of everyday and seasonal tabletop is the key to ringing up sales

BY SUE WARDEN



Tabletop and giftware from Tag distributed by Candym Enterprises.

Today's savvy and sophisticated hostess is long on style and short on time. When the party season swings into full gear, show her how easy it is to host fun and memorable events for family and friends with a great assortment of products and creative ideas for holiday entertaining.

BUYING HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING

How do you accommodate all your customers' various styles when it comes to entertaining? Start with a great selection of whiteware. Customers can interchange whiteware with their existing tabletop patterns and use it as a base for holiday-themed tabletop such as appetizer plates and serving dishes.

Serving pieces such as rectangular, square and oval platters, appetizer spoons, divided servers, bowls in interesting shapes, cheese platters and domes, and small dip bowls are strong players in

whiteware. For fun, throw some funky shapes into the mix such as triangles, hearts and waves.

Depending on your real estate, carrying one or two styles of boxed dinner sets or open stock white tableware may serve you well. Then there's bakeware. Again, your choice as to how far you venture into the world of whiteware.

Once your whiteware is in place, the next thing to consider is a good line of paper napkins. Solid colours work well as a base for holiday and seasonal prints. When choosing prints, opt for winter



Green tealight holder from Samaco Trading.



Spreaders from Tag through Candym Enterprises.

themes, which have a longer shelf life than Christmas themes, and go green if possible. Stock dinner, luncheon and cocktail sizes.

Generally speaking, tablecloths and placemats are used equally, so buy coordinating styles and colours of each, along with fabric napkins. Don't overlook napkin rings and placecard holders. They come in every style and shape imaginable. Keep numbers in mind when buying. Most people buy napkin rings and placecard holders in combinations of four, six, eight and 12.

Glassware isn't essential to a good holiday entertaining section, but white and red wine glasses and tumblers for both alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks do complete the picture.

Gifty items such as tealight holders and spreaders are perfect hostess gifts. Stock up on styles which complement your holiday entertaining themes.

Finally, create texture and dimension with beautiful centerpieces such as floral designs and wreaths.

Table runner from Tag through Candym Enterprises.



It's a good idea to purchase in themes. Create a story board before your buying trip begins to help narrow down your choices and provide a roadmap.

Shopping List

- White dinnerware
- White serveware
- Holiday-themed appetizer and salad plates
- Coloured chargers
- Solid and printed paper napkins (*all sizes*)
- Solid and printed tablecloths, placemats, napkins and runners
- Napkin rings
- Placecard holders
- Glassware
- Floral arrangements and centerpieces
- Tealight holders

DISPLAYING HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING

Of course, table settings are a must when it comes to displaying (and selling) entertaining for the holidays. If possible, remove all tags and stickers from feature displays, so the product not the price

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Floral arrangement from Winward Silks of Canada.



Heart-shaped dishes from Maxwell & Williams distributed by Northdale Trading.



Wreath from Winward Silks of Canada.



Appetizer plate from Samaco Trading.



Placecard holders from Winward Silks of Canada.

tag, is prominent. Remember, customers crave inspiration, so cross merchandising with home décor items and kitchenware to create displays they can recreate in their own homes will increase sales and promote impulse buys.

Keep whiteware serving platters and serveware close at hand and decoratively displayed. If there's room, incorporate a few pieces onto the table.

Set up a display of tabletop for a cocktail party. Include a few packages of paper napkins, appetizer plates and spreaders to give customers creative ideas on how to set a cocktail party side table.

Use proper napkin displayers to display large quantities of napkins without taking up a great deal of room.

Whenever possible ensure the products that are being displayed in your lifestyle vignettes are stocked in direct reach and eyesight of feature displays. Small items such as spreaders, candles and napkin rings can be placed in baskets underneath

the table. Larger items, such as plates and glassware, should be displayed safely on shelves nearby.

SELLING HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING

This is the fun part! The sky is the limit with respect to marketing ideas and in-store promotions. Invite your VIP customers to a cocktail party and incorporate as many of these products as possible into the event. For example, serve appetizers on small ceramic white spoons, create lovely displays of food on platters and pass around decorative paper napkins.

Consider contacting the local high school or college to see if a music student or group of students would be willing to come by to provide music, and set up a draw for a special gift to be given away. The draw will create excitement during the event, as well as provide information for your mailing list. (Be sure to adhere to privacy laws when collecting any personal information.)

Another event to consider is a how-to seminar on holiday entertaining. This type of event allows you to show and discuss your products, while educating customers and providing them with a fun and free evening or afternoon out. During these events, consider offering a 10 per cent discount on purchases made that day.

When it comes to selling entertaining for the holidays, it's important to purchase a good selection, merchandise it well and show customers how to use the products with creative displays and in-store events. ■

Sue Warden is a seasoned television host, designer, decorator, author and successful retailer.

For contact information on the suppliers mentioned here, turn to page 86.

All products from Tag available through Candym Enterprises.

