

# BUYING & SELLING GLASSWARE



Focus your glassware sales strategy on imaginative and endless uses and watch your sales flourish

BY SUE WARDEN

*Glassware is an affordable way to enhance a home. It complements almost every decorating style and can be used in a variety of ways. Offer a good selection with simple ideas on how to use the pieces and your customers will thank you with a purchase. Understanding this trend will enhance your ability to make wise buying decisions.*

## BUYING GLASSWARE

Glassware is most commonly associated with vases and drinking glasses. However, there are many types of decorative glass items which can be used for other purposes. For example, candles can be housed in large glass containers, and glass bowls can be used to hold shards of faux glass, pebbles and sand, along with spheres and ornaments.

Showcasing food in glassware takes entertaining to a whole new level. For a fabulous centerpiece, large pedestal glass bowls play host to a layered salad

or trifle. Glass plates, bowls and cups can be mixed with everyday dinnerware to add more texture and flair to the table. Customers who wish to expand a dinnerware collection can sometimes find it challenging because patterns are so often discontinued, so adding glass is an easy and affordable solution. Certainly, glassware is a product category well suited to most retailers whether they carry gifts, home décor or specialty kitchen items.

Carrying a good assortment of various shaped bowls and vessels, along with stemmed home décor pieces, allows

you to cross merchandise with almost everything else in your store. Source an assortment of small bud vases; medium and large vases; hurricanes and apothecary jars; bowls, serving platters and plates; decorative bowls for floating flowers or candles, and perhaps one or two interesting decorative pieces.

## DISPLAYING GLASSWARE

Here are a few things to keep in mind in order for glassware to sell through. It's essential that it be kept clean and free of dust at all times. At least one example



of each piece should be taken out of the box and displayed where it will be best seen and appreciated. Glass placed in a dark corner isn't going to sell. Similarly, glassware displayed with no inspirational ideas is going to sit longer. Like all merchandise, glassware should be moved to another location if it doesn't sell within a certain time frame, which could be anywhere from a few days to a week depending on your traffic flow.

Show customers how versatile glassware is by cross merchandising it with other categories and showcasing its variety of uses. Think outside the box. Facecloths can be placed in glass bowls and displayed in a bath department. Glass vessels look wonderful filled with decorative napkins and napkin rings on a dining table or counter. Fill any shaped glass piece with artificial lemons or limes for a fresh kitchen display. Tall cylinder vases are fabulous for displaying natural items such as branches, sticks and berries or artificial flower stems, and there's nothing like a tall display of gerbera daisies in the spring. Using glassware to display items not only sells the glass, but it also sells the items contained in the glass.

Beyond complementary product, the elements available to enhance a decorative piece of glass are endless. Look for coloured glass rocks that can be placed in a water-filled vase ready for flowers or a floating candle. Coloured or neutral sand makes a great secure base for holding a candle in place. River rock creates an earthy look, and nature itself gives an abundant list of ideas such as seashells, small pebbles and moss. Food items can also be used, such as cranberries, during the holiday season.

Customers need creative ideas to inspire them. In-store lifestyle displays, like the following, will create a need or desire for the product.

- Line three bud vases in a row on a table, mantle or bedroom dresser
- Place candleholders with colourful candles in a living room vignette to make it warm and inviting
- Group large bunches of silk flower stems together in modern glass pieces to show customers how to display flowers
- Use real "fake" food from companies such as Two Hot Peppers to give a realistic look to any food display ([www.twohotpeppers.com](http://www.twohotpeppers.com))

### SELLING GLASSWARE

Provide extra sales training for your staff on the various uses for glassware. Make it interesting and fun. Being involved in the creative process will encourage staff to be involved in the selling of the product. An hour spent allowing members of your team to experiment with vases, flowers, bowl inserts and decorative accents such as sand, pebbles and gems will surely lead to great merchandising ideas and more enthusiasm on the floor, which in turn leads to sales.

Product demonstrations are a sure-fire way to sell product on any given day of the week. Often seminars are slotted in during special dates, such as open houses or holidays, but the time to do demonstrations is anytime. Advertise a demonstration on "Creative Uses for Glassware". Set up an attractively covered table in the front of the store. Have a trained staff member conduct the demonstrations, either ongoing or every few hours. Ensure a good quantity of the product being demonstrated is right at the demonstration table to encourage impulse buys. Sales can be lost if customers have to go hunting. Simple how-to project sheets outlining what was covered in the demonstration are a great way to help customers and encourage repeat business.



The power of this type of customer service becomes evident in sales as you set yourself up as a "category expert".

Finally, consider grouping certain items together and allowing a small discount. For example, glass serving plates can be packaged and sold in sets of three or glasses in sets of six. This increases sales and also avoids ones and twos of various items being left behind. ■

*Images clockwise from opposite page: Indaba Trading, Abbott, Abbott and Muti & Co. Company details start on page 40.*

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