



DISPLAY Do's and Don'ts

By Barbara Wujcik

Shoppers are incredibly picky today, especially when it comes to store environments. To help you keep up with the times, *Fancy Food* checked with the experts at Chute Gerdeman, the Columbus, Ohio-based retail branding and design firm.

Here they share some Do's and Don'ts to help you take a critical look at your shop and to prepare for 2012.

Do

1 Think about yourself and your buyers more as curators, rather than simple shopkeepers. You may not have the largest assortment in town, but you can certainly have a strong point of view.

2 DISPLAY YOUR MERCHANDISE IN "STORIES" RATHER THAN SIMPLY SETTLING FOR AN ARTFUL DISPLAY. CREATE VIGNETTES SO THAT YOUR CUSTOMERS SEE THE BENEFITS OF CREATING A TABLETOP SETTING THAT WILL WOW THEIR DINNER GUESTS.

4 Shop garage sales or tag sales for funky, fun items to use for displays. For inspiration, visit an Anthropologie store if there's one nearby.

6 Train your customers to come back often. Let them know you have new merchandise arriving regularly and re-arrange your displays frequently to provide ever-changing inspiration.

7 Consider how to integrate technology into your store. With tablets selling for under \$500, there's no reason to assume that technology is just for the big brands.

3 Make good use of signage and graphics, and make sure they correlate with the story you are telling. Visit your local printers and stay on top of their ever-growing capabilities.

5 YOUR CUSTOMERS ARE PROBABLY GETTING OLDER, AND YOU WANT TO HELP THEM FEEL COMFORTABLE SO THEY WILL STAY AND SHOP. CONSIDER ADDING A COMFORTABLE SEATING AREA.

Don't

1 DON'T HESITATE TO ASK FOR YOUR CUSTOMER'S OPINION. ASK THEM WHAT THEY LIKE ABOUT YOUR STORE, AND BE PREPARED TO TAKE A SEAT WHILE A TORRENT OF COMPLIMENTS, GRUMBLES AND MEMORIES SPILL OVER. UNMET NEEDS? OH, YES. IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT? PLENTY.

2 Don't stay home. Get out, go shopping and find ideas you can copy in your store.

3 Avoid cluttering your space and packing the merchandise into every available corner.

4 Don't let your store get dusty or shop-worn. Keep every corner immaculate!

5 DON'T GET SO BOGGED DOWN IN THE DAY-TO-DAY DETAILS THAT YOU STOP HAVING FUN OR LOSE YOUR PASSION FOR THE BUSINESS. IF THAT HAPPENS, YOUR CUSTOMERS WILL MOST LIKELY NOTICE.