



Tasty Delights

One seasoned fourth-quarter distributor offers six tips for making this holiday gift season your best ever.

With all the talk of business difficulties and economic problems, you've probably heard clients say that sending gifts this holiday season is a luxury they can't afford. But there are many economical gift choices you can suggest to help clients thank their customers and recognize their employees without breaking the bank.

With the following six tips, you can suggest mouth-watering gourmet treats your clients will be proud to send – and recipients will savor.

1. Take The Taste Test

Taste testing is essential. You wouldn't recommend a restaurant without eating there first, so why would you suggest a food gift without trying it? Get samples from any suppliers you're considering ordering from this holiday season. In addition to taste, pay attention to other details: cookies should be soft, nuts not overly salty and brownies not too dry or too greasy.

2. Make Your Mark

Successful holiday gift programs should delight recipients and get your client's company name in front of them. Make the mark by customizing tins that contain cookies, nuts or popcorn, fire-branding wooden box containers or custom etching wine bottles. This is a vital step in the process to suggest to clients, because this is how their brand will get recognized after the food is gone. Make sure your clients understand the importance of customization this holiday season.

3. Determine Gift Levels

If your clients are like most companies, their customer mix ranges from occasional purchasers to big spenders. Suggest tailoring holiday gifts to client size or annual expenditure to make the most of your client's budget. In response to the economy, smaller tins of cookies, bags of nuts or boxes of candy have been introduced so your clients can still thank customers during the holidays while keeping expenses in check.

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4. Get Personal

In addition to customizing the food gift with your client's logo, gifts can also be personalized by including a gift card with the presentations. Many suppliers offer a generic card and will hand sign your client's company name. If your clients have company holiday cards produced, they can be inserted for that personal message. For a little harder sell during the holiday season, business cards can also be included in the packaging.

5. It's All In The Packaging

The package is the first thing gift recipients see, and your clients don't have a second chance to make a first impression. Look for the upscale, boutique styles fashioned after the famous Godiva brand. Make sure the packaging sends the desired message and is a reflection of your client's company. Because of the first-impression factor,

this is one area clients should plan into their gift budgets.

6. Plan Ahead

If you haven't already started talking to clients about holiday gifts, do it now. Don't let your clients wait until after Thanksgiving to think about it. Start now. Bring food samples to your appointments to get the idea that the holidays are right around the corner. Work closely with your suppliers to offer

the right choices for your client's image and budget, and you'll make this season your best yet. ○

Najla Furgason is president of Creative Expressions of Tampa Bay, Inc. (asi/170540), a certified women's business enterprise that specializes in gourmet food gifts, corporate business gifts and promotional products. She can be reached at 813-657-3530 or www.gourmetfoodgiftpeople.com.

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