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TOP 50 HOUSEWARES RETAILERS REPORT

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Ross Dress For Less
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HSN Ocean State Job Lot
Ollie's Bargain Outlet

Bed Bath & Beyond Sam's Club

Williams-Sonoma Burlington Wayfair **Home Depot**
Sur La Table **Dollar General**

Pier 1 Imports Meijer Macy's **Amazon**

Costco Belk QVC Dick's Sporting Goods

Marshalls Home Goods Kohl's The Pampered Chef

JCPenney Rite Aid Michaels Stores **T.J. Maxx**
Army & Air Force Exchange Fingerhut

Rural King **Walmart** Ace Hardware Zulily
Walgreens Academy Sports Jo Ann Fabrics

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TOP 50 HOUSEWARES RETAILERS REPORT

Pandemic Resets Housewares Retailing Balance Of Power

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INSIDE



Generational Marketing

Social responsibility shapes shopping choices of a generation in crisis.

Page 24

“We look forward to welcoming GC Buying Group stores and vendors to Dallas for inspiration and business renewal.”

—Cindy Morris,
Dallas Market Center

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Kitchen Electrics

Groupe SEB, StoreBound invest in growing Dash electrics brand. Page 10



Cook & Bake

SharkNinja enters cookware category with Foodi sets. Page 36



Pandemic Resets Housewares Retailing Balance Of Power

BY MIKE DUFF
Executive Editor

NEW YORK— Normal is never going to look the same again, and although circumstances are shaping up to provide profound opportunity for housewares and home furnishings retailers, the emerging marketplace is going to require sweeping, even radical, departures from past practices.

In recognition of this reality, HOME-WORLD BUSINESS[®] decided to forgo

its traditional Top 100 Housewares Retailers look at what happened in the year past among top operators and re-focus on the past six months, as what has happened in that time frame will influence the operations of retailers and vendors of home-related products far more than what happened in 2019.

Not that previous trends in the marketplace have faded to unimportance, rather they have been accelerated or relegated, at least temporarily, and while the relevance of developments will

change over time, what is happening to and among participants is changing internal dynamics driven by demand from consumers whose whole outlook has been reshaped.

The greater attention consumers are paying to their homes, activities and domestic lifestyles just happens to be a terrific opportunity for retailers and vendors who can supply the products that help them realize their now more far-reaching household aspirations.

“The pandemic has forced consumers to eat at home,” said Joe Derochowski, vp/home industry adviser for The NPD

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TOP 50 LISTING STARTS ON PAGE 13



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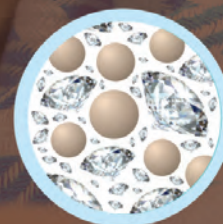
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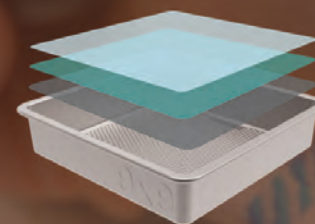
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HOMEWORLD BUSINESS

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At a time when product developers are mixing furniture styles to create signature looks for their collections, CB2 has introduced a collection in partnership with interior designer Kara Mann that it describes as a little classic, infused with a little moody and enhanced with a touch of the '80s.

HOMEWORLD BUSINESS® (ISSN No. 13448-0641) is published bi-weekly except one issue in March, June, July, August, September, October, November and December by ICD Publications, 150 Motor Parkway, Suite 401, Hauppauge, NY 11788. (631) 246-9300. ©ICD Publications, 2020. All rights reserved. Periodical postage paid at Hauppauge, NY 11788 and additional offices. Information contained herein is subject to change without notice. No responsibility is assumed by the publisher for its accuracy or completeness. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to HOMEWORLD BUSINESS®, P.O. Box 5815, Hauppauge, NY 11788-0169. Publisher at all times reserves the right to refuse to publish any Ad, text or other content for any reason and regardless of whether any such Ad Material was previously accepted by Publisher.

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Groupe SEB, StoreBound Invest In Growing Dash Electrics Brand

By DONNA BOYLE SCHWARTZ
Contributing Editor

NEW YORK— StoreBound is poised to continue its growth trajectory domestically and globally following a majority investment by multi-national manufacturer Groupe SEB.

Groupe SEB became the majority stakeholder in StoreBound in a transaction that closed July 31. StoreBound is known for creating innovative kitchen electrics under the Dash brand, as well as co-branded collections with chef Geoffrey Zakarian and others. Founded in 2010 by chief executive Evan Dash and his wife, Rachel, StoreBound has gained ground rapidly in the U.S. housewares market, launching more than 200 products through a strong omnichannel distribution model, combining offline retail, e-commerce and social media.

“The synergies between StoreBound and Groupe SEB were the impetus for the partnership,” said Dash. “We expect little change to our current organization. Our full management team will remain in place and we will continue to execute the strategies that are fueling our growth in the market. The main difference is that we will have access to the resources, expertise and global reach of

Groupe SEB with a direct reporting relationship to the team in France.”

Thierry de La Tour d’Artaise, CEO of Groupe SEB, praised StoreBound for having “built the largest organic social media following in the U.S. industry. We are pleased to welcome the StoreBound team and founders into the Groupe SEB family.”

Groupe SEB owns a portfolio of more than 30 top brands including T-fal, Rowenta, Krups, Lagostina, All-Clad, WMF and Emsa.

“With the investment in StoreBound, we will strengthen our presence in the American housewares,” de La Tour d’Artaise said. “With its strong and innovative business model and brands, StoreBound is very complementary to our consumer business in the U.S.”

Dash added, “A large social media following is like a 24/7 focus group. This following has demonstrated that our products and content resonate with young consumers. While we currently distribute the Dash brand in North America, Europe and Asia, we believe there is significantly more growth potential for the brand on a global basis. StoreBound’s primary focus will remain on the North American market and we will work with the SEB team in France to explore additional markets

StoreBound’s Dash electrics brand emphasizes health and wellness.



for the Dash brand.”

“We have several key differentiators which separate us from the competition,” he continued. “First, we are digital natives and we have built the largest organic following in the market with high levels of consumer engagement. Second, our business team all began their careers inside some of the largest retailers, so we understand exactly

continued on page 26

CB2 Positions New Kara Mann Collection

By MIKE DUFF
Executive Editor

NORTHBROOK, IL— At a time when product developers are mixing furniture styles to create signature looks for the collections they conceive, CB2 has introduced a collection in partnership with interior designer Kara Mann that it describes as a little classic, infused with a little moody and enhanced with a touch of the ‘80s.

The Kara Mann collection designs combine hard and soft lines as well as mix materials to establish a tough yet romantic collection, as CB2 put it, that has broad appeal and applicability. At the same time, the collection draws



CB2 has teamed with interior designer Kara Mann on a new furniture collection.

certain inspirations from Mann’s childhood in the 1980s, she pointed out, such as a ruffle embellishment to a sofa.

The ability to mix and match styles and aesthetics has suited mass market retailers, including those that take a

fashion forward position. The approach can update existing looks with new style innovations and give consumers something fresh and interesting that retains a degree of familiarity.

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VOLUME 32, NUMBER 13

EDITORIAL

Peter Giannetti Editor-in-Chief
PeterG@homeworldbusiness.com • 631-297-8100

Mike Duff Executive Editor
MikeD@homeworldbusiness.com • 631-246-9300 x237

Matthew Kramer Managing Editor
MatthewK@homeworldbusiness.com • 631-246-9300 x215

Lauren DeBellis Senior Editor
LaurenD@homeworldbusiness.com • 631-246-9300 x252

Emily Cappiello Contributing Editor
EmilyC@homeworldbusiness.com • 631-246-9300 x211

Donna Boyle Schwartz Contributing Editor
DonnaS@homeworldbusiness.com • 845-298-9365

ADVERTISING

Dave Palcek President/Co-Publisher
DaveP@homeworldbusiness.com • 847-913-8244

Cynthia Evans Senior Vice President/Co-Publisher
CyndiE@homeworldbusiness.com • 847-913-8251

Larry Oliver Business Development
LarryO@homeworldbusiness.com • 631-246-9300 x246

Susan McDonald Classified Advertising
SusanM@homeworldbusiness.com • 631-246-9300 x224

DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY

Eliud Custodio Director of Design & Technology
EliudC@icdnet.com • 631-297-8106

Richard Burns Information Technology Manager
RichardB@icdnet.com • 631-246-9300 x212

Renée Alborelli Senior Artist
ReneeA@icdnet.com • 631-246-9300 x228

Anna M. Davidson Senior Artist
AnnaD@icdnet.com • 631-246-9300 x220

Fernando Santos Senior Artist/Senior Video Editor
FernandoS@icdnet.com • 631-246-9300 x216

Erin Helmers Advertising Operations Coordinator
ErinH@icdnet.com • 631-246-9300 x250

Robert Marston Information Technology Associate
RobertM@icdnet.com • 631-246-9300 x229

Jake Gold Video Editor
JakeG@icdnet.com • 631-246-9300 x243

PRODUCTION & CIRCULATION

Nadine Salogub Director of Production & Circulation
NadineS@homeworldbusiness.com • 631-297-8104

Suzette Schear Assistant Production Manager
SuzetteS@homeworldbusiness.com • 631-246-9300 x222

Denise Moscatel Circulation Associate
DeniseM@homeworldbusiness.com • 631-246-9300 x221

ICD PUBLICATIONS

Dave Palcek President/CEO

Cynthia Evans Senior Vice President

Peter Giannetti VP, Editorial & Publishing Operations

Eliud Custodio Director of Design & Technology

Nadine Salogub Director of Production & Circulation

NEW YORK

150 Motor Parkway, Suite 401
Hauppauge, NY 11788
Main: (631) 246-9300 • Fax: (631) 246-9496

CHICAGO

175 Olde Half Day Road, Suite 240
Lincolnshire, Illinois 60069
Main: (847) 913-8295 • Fax: (847) 913-9202

E-mail: info@homeworldbusiness.com
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Pivoting To A More Responsive Retailer Ranking

FIRST-HALF RETAIL FINANCIALS confirm sudden shifts in retailer market share during the pandemic.

The results also confirm an unprecedented, yet necessary, pivot by the HomeWorld Business team in the development of its annual ranking of top housewares retailers.



Recalibrated Power

Our usual deep dive into top 100 housewares retailers, a special statistical report that had anchored September editions of HomeWorld every year since its launch in 1989, served up a reliable gauge of leading retailers' housewares sales the previous year while recording a steady evolution of market share best measured over longer periods.

The HomeWorld team realized, however, an historic pandemic that shut-down most physical stores, benefitted a privileged few "essential" operators and accelerated e-commerce across the map would render a ranking of the previous year's housewares retailers outdated and irrelevant by September. Instead, our readers, in so fluid a marketplace, require a precise look into how the pandemic has recalibrated the balance of power among housewares retailers in less than half a year.

We saw no choice but to convert the

longstanding methodology behind our top 100 housewares retailers ranking to present HomeWorld's Top 50 Housewares Retailers ranked by houseware sales through the first six months of 2020.

To report such an up-to-date, vivid picture of pandemic-influenced retail housewares sales,

HomeWorld partnered with leading retail market analytics firm The NPD Group, which ranked the top 50 retailers by housewares sales in the January-June period of this year, according to NPD's Checkout service. The service tracks sales across retail channels over time from a panel of more than 130,000 consumers who provide NPD with receipt-based information on in-store and e-commerce purchases.

Top-Line Detail

HomeWorld Business Executive Editor Mike Duff provides accompanying in-depth analysis of the first-half shifts in retailer housewares sales while examining if such situational realignment could become more permanent.

I won't spoil the ending, but a look at this timely Top 50 Housewares Retailers ranking confirms, in revealing top-line detail, presumptions about which operators benefitted the most

as the pandemic escalated through the second quarter. Beyond detailing the first-half performance of many retailers expected to be among the top housewares retailers, the report also spotlights retailers whose surprising inclusion among the Top 50 underscores how pressing homebound consumer needs and wants drew people to outlets not ordinarily recognized for surging housewares sales.

Strategies & Practices

This pandemic necessitated swift and substantial pivoting along the housewares supply chain from strategies and practices that in many cases have been highly reliable and productive from year to year.

HomeWorld pivoted, too, to deliver a Top 50 Housewares Retailers report serving the need for a more responsive measure of such sudden, sweeping change.

Peter Giannetti
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Still Working From Home?

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IMC's Juniper Brand Aims To Connect Buyers And Sellers

BY MIKE DUFF
Executive Editor

LAS VEGAS— International Market Centers' digital division, IMC_di, has developed a new identity, Juniper, to create a unified vision of its initiatives and tools developed to enhance buyer and seller relationships across the home furnishings, gift and apparel sectors that its trade shows support.

Eric Dean, IMC_di president, noted that, in launching the new Juniper brand identity for its suite of digital tools, the company is positioning a virtual enterprise that can support the parent company's physical markets and that can grow as a digital operation as opportunities to link buyers and sellers emerge and evolve.

"We realized that we needed something to rally around," Dean said. "We wanted a brand that we could rally around. Something we could point to that really told the story of what we wanted to do. We're going to rally around Juniper by IMC_di. Juniper is going to be the brand name, the umbrella brand, that covers all our digital solutions."

The Juniper identity expresses the brand's core platform: simplicity, connection and growth. Juniper comes to

represent the arrival of IMC_di as a fully realized organization developed from legacy technologies acquired by International Market Centers, with ShopZio and Catalog Connexion being the critical components. Juniper is rolling out its suite of digital tools supported by a platform and applications that provide multiple utilities.

"What we are at our core is a market maker," Dean said. "We also need to change with the times. Ten years ago, it wasn't that important to have a strong digital offering. The adoption wasn't there. The adoption's there now. What you are seeing from IMC is a commitment to meet buyers and sellers where they are. To make that market, we need to be great at putting buyers and sellers together everywhere. We know that buyers and sellers come together at market. They come together online every day, and out on the road. Whether it's services or an extension of the products that IMC offers, Juniper will make that buy/sell

connection as efficient as possible."

Already, the company has released Juniper Web, an e-commerce website tool, to facilitate wholesale vendor and rep sales to retailers. Juniper MKT is a B2B e-commerce marketplace that will enable 365 day a year buyer and seller interaction from generating leads, managing customers and making deals to shopping favorite suppliers, discovering new brands and creating custom shopping carts.

Juniper SNQ, a product information management and data syndication tool, debuts in 2021 to aid wholesale vendors and sales agencies in managing and sharing product data across multiple e-commerce platforms. In the same timeframe, Juniper SLS will roll out as a mobile sales application software that generates orders and manages customer relationships for vendors and sales agencies. Juniper CRM bows as a transactional customer relationship management application before the end of 2021.

Juniper arrives in a three-tiered structure that allows businesses of all sizes to tailor its tools to their specific needs and budgets. Dean noted that it developed Juniper products so that its many features can serve interior designers, mass merchants and any appropriate enterprise in between, beginning with product discovery but extending to transactional and logistical support.

"We look at this as a whole ecosystem," Dean said. "Juniper doesn't have

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**HOUSEWARES
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TOP 50

HOUSEWARES RETAILERS

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Rank	Company	Headquarters	Number of Stores	Buyer Penetration: % of population 18+ who bought at retailer	Total Housewares Sales* January - June 2020
1		Seattle, WA	544	41%	\$6,937 million
2		Bentonville, AR	5,373	52%	\$4,948 million
3		Minneapolis, MN	1,880	24%	\$1,890 million
4		Issaquah, WA	547	6%	\$1,138 million
5		Union, NJ	1414	6%	\$739 million
6		Atlanta, GA	2,293	5%	\$586 million
7		Mooresville, NC	1,968	4%	\$480 million
8		Richfield, MN	1,005	1%	\$459 million
9		Bentonville, AR	599	4%	\$365 million
10		Menomonee Falls, WI	1,159	3%	\$327 million
11		Addison, IL	0	1%	\$282 million
12		Goodlettsville, TN	16,720	11%	\$238 million
13		Cincinnati, OH	546	2%	\$237 million
14		West Chester, PA	0	1%	\$176 million
15		Deerfield, IL	9,095	3%	\$173 million
16		Framingham, MA	1,271	4%	\$152 million
17		Grand Rapids, MI	253	3%	\$151 million
18		Columbus, OH	1,407	4%	\$141 million
19		Charlotte, NC	7,808	6%	\$131 million
20		Westborough, MA	219	2%	\$124 million
21		Framingham, MA	818	2%	\$119 million
22		Framingham, MA	1,134	3%	\$109 million
23		Chesapeake, VA	7,562	15%	\$104 million
24		Eau Claire, WI	350	1%	\$100 million
25		New York, NY	1,566	3%	\$89 million

*Buyer Penetration, Total Housewares Sales: NPD Group Checkout service receipt-based consumer data. **Number is approximate. Store Counts: HomeWorld Research and Estimates.



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TOP 50

HOUSEWARES RETAILERS

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Rank	Company	Headquarters	Number of Stores	Buyer Penetration: % of population 18+ who bought at retailer	Total Housewares Sales* January - June 2020
26	ULTA BEAUTY	Bolingbrook, IL	1,264	1%	\$82 million
27	OLIES OUTLET Bargain GOOD STUFF CHEAP	Harrisburg, PA	370	2%	\$75 million
28	CVS pharmacy	Woonsocket, RI	9,941	1%	\$64 million
29	WILLIAMS-SONOMA	San Francisco, CA	616	<1%	\$59 million
30	FINGERHUT® Now You Can!	Prairie, MN	0	<1%	\$59 million
31	wayfair	Boston, MA	2	<1%	\$58 million
32	HSN	St. Petersburg, FL	0	<1%	\$55 million
33	Sur la table	Seattle, WA	130	<1%	\$49 million
34	Burlington	Burlington, NJ	739	1%	\$40 million
35	ACE Hardware	Oak Brook, IL	4,564	1%	\$39 million
36	JCPenney	Plano, TX	846	<1%	\$37 million
37	JOANN	Hudson, OH	865	1%	\$31 million
38	belk	Charlotte, NC	296	<1%	\$31 million
39	Fred Meyer	Portland, OR	134**	1%	\$30 million
40	DICK'S SPORTING GOODS	Pittsburgh, PA	726	<1%	\$27 million
41	RITE AID	Camp Hill, PA	2,457	1%	\$27 million
42	sears	Hoffman Estates, IL	84	<1%	\$24 million
43	Crate&Barrel	Northbrook, IL	72	<1%	\$23 million
44	Michaels Where Creativity Happens	Irving, TX	1,275	1%	\$22 million
45	Academy SPORTS+OUTDOORS	Katy, TX	259	<1%	\$21 million
46	zulily	Seattle, WA	0	<1%	\$20 million
47	Pier 1 imports	Fort Worth, TX	541	<1%	\$19 million
48	Rural King America's Farm and Home Store	Mattoon, IL	120	<1%	\$18 million
49	Ocean State JOB LOT	North Kingston, RI	140	1%	\$18 million
50	EXCHANGE ARMY & AIR FORCE EXCHANGE SERVICE	Dallas, TX	122	<1%	\$17 million

*Buyer Penetration, Total Housewares Sales: NPD Group Checkout service receipt-based consumer data. **Number is approximate. Store Counts: HomeWorld Research and Estimates.



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Top 50

continued from page 5

Group. “You have more family activities in the home, more entertaining inside or outside the house, people doing things to battle boredom or monotony. It has made our industry hot. Sales are up every week except one. This is where the consumer is spending money. That’s good, because it’s setting the foundation of what comes next.”

Because change is coming so hard and fast in the current state of affairs, *HomeWorld Business* decided to work with The NPD Group to look specifically at what happened to housewares sales in the first half of 2020, with additional consideration paid to household penetration achieved by major retailers. Compared to past evaluations of the retail marketplace for home products, change is evident in the Top 50. Take Amazon, for example.

Where previously, Amazon was further down the Top 10, in fact number seven in the 2019 top 100 covering sales in 2018, the COVID-19 pandemic has propelled it to the top of the housewares heap, at least for now.

Although Amazon sales going up is hardly a new phenomenon, what’s important to consider is the unique

contributions the coronavirus pandemic made its leap to the top of the heap. For one, Amazon’s store and bricks and clicks rivals had to deal with store shutdowns or at least traffic restrictions. Couple that with a marketplace where many people felt less than comfortable leaving home and where many critical categories are made up of products clumsy to be received in stores or even at curbside, particularly items such as home office workstations and outdoor furniture, and the shift to Amazon becomes something more than just the continuation of a retail trend.

Also noteworthy is that Amazon recorded so many housewares sales

despite its shifting priorities to everyday necessities, food, consumables and cleaning suppliers, and limiting inventory replenishment in its own 1P distribution system of other product categories. What shines through is the importance of the company’s marketplace, especially the role of third-party sellers that could themselves fulfill orders coming through the Amazon website. Evidence of retail’s realization of how important marketplaces can be extends beyond Amazon and includes the recent Kroger decision to create a third-party marketplace and Walmart’s initiatives with Shopify and Walmart Fulfillment Services to expand its 3P

enterprise and make it more effective.

In the company’s first quarter conference call on April 30, amidst a range of coronavirus-response measures underway throughout the U.S. and around the world, Brian Olsavsky, Amazon’s CFO, pointed out that the company’s 3P marketplace sellers helped sustain the retailer during a time when it was restricting vendors of non-essential product from restocking inventory in the 1P fulfillment system.

Three months later, in a second quarter conference call, Olsavsky said, “Third-party units continue to represent more than half of overall unit volume, helped by improved quarter-over-quarter growth in active sellers. We are more committed than ever to supporting the success of the hundreds of thousands of small and medium-sized businesses to sell their products in Amazon stores.”

Essential Retailing

Retailers that could remain open while others had to go dark at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic did particularly well among Top 50 retailers, while those that didn’t fared worse compared to what might otherwise have been expected. Although differences in methodologies and time periods covered make comparisons approximate, differences between the 2019 Top 100 and 2020 Top 50 are worth noting, among them Bed Bath & Beyond’s hanging onto a top 10 spot, given the problems the retailer has encountered recently and its lag in developing a competitive e-commerce platform; and TJX banners maintaining themselves in fairly good form due to strength before and immediately after retail shutdowns.

Also noteworthy is the absence from the Top 50 of major supermarket

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Source & Methodology

The NPD Group’s Checkout service provides the retailer housewares sales totals and buyer penetration rates used in the ranking of the HomeWorld Business Top 50 Housewares Retailers for January-June 2020.

Checkout offers robust data for tracking and improving performance across all channels plus buyer analytics to help businesses keep current customers and win new ones. More than 130,000 consumers, the largest omnichannel panel focused on general merchandise and foodservice, provides it with receipt-based information on their in-store and e-commerce purchases. With comprehensive data from the same consumers over time, Checkout illuminates trends in behavior including migration to shopping online by category and consumer demographics. Buyer analytics deliver insight into most valuable customers, brand loyalty, brand leakage/lift, brand launches and more. —The NPD Group

Houseware sales include the following categories: Electrics: Air Purifiers/Humidifiers, Blending & Processing, Breadmaker, Citrus Juicer, Coffee Grinder, Coffee/Espresso Makers, Compact Refrigerators, Cookers, Countertop Microwave Oven, Curling Irons/Stylers, Dehumidifiers, Electric Can Opener, Electric Food Sealer Bags (Consumer Only), Electric Grills/Griddles, Electric Kettles, Electric Shaver Replacement Parts, Electric Shavers, Electric Skillets/Woks, Fans, Food Dehydrator, Frothers, Full Size Vacuums, Garment Care, Hairdryers, Hairsetters, Hand/Stick Vacuums, Heaters, Heating Pads, Home Hair Clippers, Home Health/Wellness (Consumer Only), Home Soda Machines, Hot Plates, Ipl, Juice Extractor, Lighted Mirrors, Massaging Appliances, Mens Trimmer, Microwave Oven, Misc. Small Appliances, Mixers, Non-Electric Carpet Sweepers, Oral Care Appliance, Oral, Care Replacement Parts, Other Microwave Ovens, Portable Induction Cooktops, Room Air Conditioners, Scales, Sewing Machine (Consumer Only), Specialty Cleaning, Specialty Coffee/Espresso Makers, Specialty Kitchen Electrics, Toaster, Toaster Oven, Unspecified Small Domestic Appliances, Vacuum Accessories, Vacuum Sealers, Waffle Iron/Sandwich Maker, Water Filtration Devices, Water Filtration Replacement Filters, Wine Coolers; Non-electrics: Bake/Mix/Measure, Bakeware, Beverageware, Chop/Slice/Core, Cookware, Cutlery, Dinnerware, Entertaining Gadgets, Flatware, Food Storage, Gadgets, Cooking-Unspecified, Grate/Peel/Clean, Housewares-Unspecified, Kettles, Kitchen Tools, Open/Close, Other Cooking Gadgets, Other Preparation, Portable Beverageware, Serving Gadgets, Specialty Gadgets



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TOP 50

HOUSEWARES RETAILERS

Special Report: The Pandemic Effect

Top 50

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chains Ahold, Albertson's and H-E-B, although they remained essential retailers through the pandemic serving everyday customer needs, and the appearance of retailers such as Rural King that consumers may have been leaning on more heavily in the COVID-19 pandemic that they had previously.

Although specific observations suggest how broader developments are proceeding, Derochowski said it's important to recognize that no specific development is guaranteed to be a dominant influence as the market proceeds through and beyond the coronavirus. Rather, what's critical is that retailers and vendors embrace flexibility and agility in response to developments. The coronavirus crisis has squeezed what would have been several years of market development into one and pushed factors that have been affecting the market, such as sustainability and fair trade, into something of a back seat at least for the time being as consumers deal with immediate and pressing issues.

Retail has done something it usually doesn't do well in response to the coronavirus crisis: It has made rapid and decisive changes. Derochowski compared retail to a large ship, one that takes time to turn in response to the helm. Not so in 2020. Whether it's the rapid adoption of curbside pickup among retailers who never previously initiated the service or the intensified use of social media to demonstrate the availability of key products, retailers have moved to explore the needs and the opportunities consumers dealing with the coronavirus crisis can afford.

Vendors have moved with them, finding ways to accommodate the changing demands coming from their retail partners and, ultimately, the consumer, including enhanced use of social media.

Derochowski said the COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S., while tragic, turned the increasingly homebound consumer to consideration of their homes. As work, meals and entertainment increasingly gravitated to the household, demand for housewares and other home goods gained. The enforced change on consumer lifestyles created opportunity. And not just

directly. For instance, the spotlight thrown on health by the pandemic has reinforced what already was a growing consumer focus on wellness.

At the same time, with restaurants shutting down, consumers found themselves wondering how they could make mealtime more exciting and novel while addressing the nutritional consequences of being stuck at home. With the advent of the coronavirus, consumers reevaluated their dining habits— even establishing new ones as they cooked-up cuisines they once only ordered at restaurants— while confronting the requirement to work from home and the need to liven up the household environment, all of which drove housewares and related home product sales. In the long run, adoption of new behaviors is likely to keep consumers content with their own four walls in the future.

“While these are tough times for consumers, the pandemic has fueled growth for our industry because consumers have a new set of needs to solve for and our industry has helped meet these needs as consumers eat and live more at home,” Derochowski said. “Experiential spending has been reduced significantly. Consumers need us more than ever in this pandemic.”

It doesn't stop there. Take gift giving. Recently, consumers had turned from practical gifts, which became more common during the Great Recession, to experiential ones. Now, a shift back is underway, with consumers looking to give presents that enhance the stay-at-home experience, such as cookware, kitchen gadgets or small electrics. Tableware, in-plain-sight storage, aromatherapy, any number of home-related segments have become greater gift considerations as givers look to support the lifestyle changes their friends and family members have undertaken.

Rapid Marketplace Shifts

At the same time, though, housewares purveyors, retailers and vendors both, have to be ready for additional rapid shifts in the marketplace, Derochowski said. Just as the market shifted quickly as the COVID-19 pandemic spread, developments such as the introduction of an effective vaccine, are likely to cause their own profound changes. That doesn't mean consumers will

Walmart boosted its average ticket during the pandemic.



suddenly abandon their home lives. They've developed habits, and made investments, that will keep gravitating them to home-oriented lifestyles.

Up until now, working from home and the government stimulus package have helped support consumers who have found themselves unemployed. However, going forward, a significant portion of the population will be re-evaluating their employment choices, looking for new jobs and even new industries as they get back on career paths. The opportunity to serve those consumers is emerging. Wellness will be a major consideration as consumers who have changed their behavior to avoid exposure to the COVID-19 virus consider how they can be proactive on other health issues, with ramifications likely across a range of product segments from meal prep and storage to fitness to sleep products and beyond.

To keep up with consumers, retailers and vendors have to emphasize agility in operations as necessary to change with emerging conditions as rapidly as consumers, Derochowski said. As a practical matter, that will require more cooperation between retailers and vendors who no longer have the luxury of responding to consumers via an annual product development cycle. From concept through hand-off to the consumer, whatever form that takes in the marketplace as it is evolving, product development has to be more closely aligned than ever, with the target consumer as a clear focus, he said, or opportunities will slip away.

“It has to be a win-win for everybody,” Derochowski said. “The only way to do that is to be collaborative.”

Neil Stern, senior partner at consultancy McMillan Doolittle, reiterated the idea of agility particularly when looking beyond the present year and into 2021, given the extreme volatility

HomeGoods could benefit from Stein Mart's closure.



Lowe's saw sales rise as an essential retailer.



that the immediate future holds.

“Staying agile is going to remain a key,” he said. “Whatever we think we know, we really don't.”

Along with a flexibility of approach, Stern suggests a considered wariness. Even those retailers and vendors that have benefited from the market conditions generated by the COVID-19 pandemic should remain conservative beyond their immediate goals. They may build on what's working for them, but shouldn't get too far ahead of themselves.

He pointed out, “We are still facing enormous uncertainty— recession, election, virus— that is nearly impossible to anticipate too far ahead.”

Stern said that the three major factors likely to separate winners from losers include agility, and he noted that companies that were able to quickly initiate or capitalize on buy online pick up in store, or at curbside, and to-consumer delivery are the example of what conditions will require. Also critical are strategic focus that builds on investment, especially in infrastructure and technology, that can be applied to changing conditions, and luck.

Luck has been a significant factor that companies need to consider, whether the good fortune that brings opportunity or misfortune that delivers

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Top 50

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challenges. A twist of fate can have significant consequences in today's coronavirus plagued environment, as was the case when coronavirus-related shopping restrictions kicked in at the turn of spring.

"It helped to be designated an essential business or to be selling essential products or items that fit more closely with lifestyle changes," Stern observed.

Derochowski indicated that the home products sector, both retailers and suppliers, are facing a future where consumers are more household-focused but one in which the new challenges looming are likely to cause rapid shifts that require immediate response. Already, factors such as technological innovation, both as applied to products and the systems that bring them to market, and home fashion trends have required that market adaptation occur more quickly and precisely so that the right items get in front of the consumers who have specific, and progressing, product preferences.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made that ability to change with consumers more urgent as their home-based lifestyles generate more diverse and specific demands, which increasingly will necessitate what he characterizes as a full solution that compels greater vendor and supplier coordination to generate the best return in times when investment needs to be calibrated to address immediate but fluid concerns.

Ethan Chernofsky, vp/marketing, for traffic tracker Placer.ai, said opportu-

nity will arise in the market for housewares and home goods and, in general, those segments of the market that have benefited from the pandemic. Yet, the form of those opportunities will differ depending on which retail channels are involved. For example, Dicks Sporting Goods recently developed an off-price model that could give it a lift with consumers who unemployment and uncertainty have made wary of spending but who are engaged in more personal activities that don't require socializing, such as bicycling, and prioritizing health.

The fact that so many major retailers have left the market due to pre- or primarily coronavirus related woes, off-pricer Stein Mart being one of them, has established gaps in the market that, with less competition around, can create relatively low-risk opportunities.

So, Chernofsky posited, does a retailer such as Lowe's that has had success in the COVID-19 pandemic invest some of its windfall in developing a more elaborate furniture business that would tap former Pier 1 customers?

At the same time, changing market circumstances have encouraged more vendors to explore direct to consumer operations, whether initiating them or expanding them. Consultants to Amazon operators have noted that suppliers who have built their business on Amazon but got blocked from inventory renewal as it focused on household essentials as the coronavirus pandemic advanced began exploring DTC operations and, in some cases, turned to Walmart as a hedge or alternative to the Amazon relationship.



Amazon gained housewares market share during the pandemic.

The retailers who did not get the breaks as the COVID-19 outbreak caused closures of stores deemed non-essential have found themselves in tougher circumstances this summer, with Lord & Taylor and Stage Stores conspicuous among those that couldn't endure the market conditions. J.C. Penney has been left tottering, and could turn things around, Chernofsky said, and maybe even come out ahead.

The off-price channel is one that could rebound quickly. Not only does it have a strong value proposition at a time when many consumers are out of work permanently or temporarily, but it also has a significant player gone in Stein Mart. Second quarter financials suggest consumer demand is strong, given how well Big Lots, which won essential retailer status due to its food and consumables assortment, had a huge quarter. Even those off-pricers that had to close, TJX looming largest among them, saw strong rebounds in sales on reopening until inventory issues caught up with them. With inventory moving to stores again, off-price is likely to rebound quickly and perhaps even add to the already strong momentum it demonstrated before the coronavirus.

The department store channel may be a different but not altogether dark story. Sure, the channel already had a problem with younger consumers who hadn't embraced it as had earlier generations, and the malls where department stores usually resided have been beset with their own dilemmas. However,

for a retailer such as Macy's, stores are opening again at a time when rivals are disappearing or in trouble.

Chernofsky maintained that department store operators that are smart and carefully evaluate their prospects, for example getting rid of stores that contribute to cannibalization, could gain traction in a more wide-open channel.

"A vacuum is going to be created that other brands are going to fill, and this could help those that survive the current pandemic rebound faster than expected," Chernofsky said. "Whether it be off-price leaders or high-end fashion, the exit of key players is only going to provide a boost for competitors."

In the marketplace that will come out of the coronavirus pandemic, greater coordination, transparency, systems sharing and product development coordination will be advantages that will allow housewares and home product purveyors more effectively address the challenges they face.

However normal is defined in five years, it will be a product of what has occurred over the past six months and what will occur into 2021. Derochowski said the way forward will be one of mutual communications and education between retailers and vendors who will be grappling with their own development and chances. Still, the process of interaction has to have as its goal understanding and satisfying the needs of consumers who are forming new, and, happily, home-oriented perspectives under the influence of the times. **HWB**



Walmart has boosted its omnichannel services with Walmart+, a membership based program.



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2020 Generational Marketing Report



Points Of Purchase

Social Responsibility Shapes Shopping Choices Of A Generation In Crisis

BY LAUREN DEBELLIS
Senior Editor

NEW YORK— The American consumer has changed. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a significant shift in priorities prompted by a convergence of the health, economic and political and social crises that have taken the country and the world into uncharted territory.

The pandemic has put the country on hold for months, slowed the economy and, at the same time, cast a spotlight on socio-economic issues.

For example, sustainability has progressively risen on the agenda, as people have become even more connected with their environments while sheltering at home as consumers reconsider and extend the concept of wellness.

At the same time, social and racial inequality has gotten heightened national attention due to unforeseen events that spurred massive protests and civil unrest.

This socio-political climate has forced companies within housewares and beyond to answer an immediate call by

consumers, Millennials and GenZers, to reset social responsibility standards that address social injustice, inclusion and safety. Consumers are pressuring brands to share their core values and their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices, and are holding them accountable.

“Transparency was a pre-existing trend and has certainly been highlighted by the pandemic,” said Marsha Everton, principal of the market research firm TheAIMSGroup. “We are home more often now and the visibility has been heightened. It just really matters now, even just someone saying I made a mistake and this is what we are going to do to fix it.”

In addition, according to recent research from Submittable, a cloud-based submission management platform, this pressure is increased by how deeply Millennials and GenZers hold their own values and priorities, as well as how steadfast they are about interacting with brands than previous generations.

According to Submittable, 82% of Millennials interact with brands or retailers, defined as relationship building and engagement to better understand

them as a consumer, compared to the 65% of other generation members. In addition, 49% of Millennials follow their favorite brands and retailers online, while 38% discover new brands online.

Meanwhile, 58% of their younger GenZ counterparts can't go more than four hours without Internet access before they become uncomfortable, according to a study by The Center For Generational Kinetics commissioned by WPENGINE, the WordPress digital platform. The data underscores how necessary it is for retailers and vendors alike to take an active part on social platforms and showcase their CSR programs in order to keep and retain today's consumer.

So why all the focus on the younger generational cohorts during this time of social and political awareness? The two cohorts have and are about to come into their purchasing prime. They have a great influence on their older counterparts, including Baby Boomers, and according to industry observers, it is tantamount that retailers and vendors pay close attention to Millennial and GenZ consumer behavior as it evolves.

Retail Authenticity In The Digital Age

Retailers and vendors have observed how the path to purchase changes across generations. With Millennials and GenZers, a majority want to make sure that, when they purchase a product, it comes from a brand/company that is addressing key social issues.

In fact, recent research suggests that Millennials and GenZers are more inclined to make transactional decisions based on a brand's corporate social responsibility policies than are other consumers, with those that are most vocal apt to do so most often.

The National Retail Federation recently reported that consumers are placing a greater emphasis on social tolerance issues, ranking it the 12th highest-held personal value in the U.S., up seven points from 2009. Equality, too, has seen a rise in ranking.

Under the circumstances, companies can face scrutiny that they can address by making their core values and mission imperatives clear and apparent to consumers. However, they should do so in an authentic way, so as not to make consumers feel uncomfortable, wary and untrusting of the brand.

“You don't want people to shy away because a brand is unfriendly, but at the same time you want to protect your brand,” said Leon Buck, NRF's vp/ banking and financial services. “I do

think consumer behavior is by habit, and they will continue to go to a store because they like their offerings and always have gone. However, while surveying retailers in the last few months, the majority are actively working to strengthen their policies.”

As a basis, Buck said, creating a diverse workforce is a critical factor but also achieving a comfort level within the organization.

“Most retailers are engaging with the community, whether it is through say, local Boys and Girls Clubs, internships, and similar programs to initiate the conversation,” he said. “However, they have also been engaging in exhaustive un-bias training in order to educate the workforce on the best in-house practices, on topics such as in-store profiling, which retailers are working on to make sure does not happen.”

And while some retailers have been conspicuously active as regards programs, education and monetary pledges to advance progress on social issues, a few have initiated new programs.

For example, Ikea recently held a virtual “I-KIKI,” an event typically meant for friends to get together and share stories that featured influential LGBTQ voices of Alyssa Edwards and Isis King. The duo hosted an Instagram Live open discussion about the importance of diversity and inclusion that was streamed on their respective Instagram channels.

The company’s use of influencers and popular social media platforms is an example of how brands are fostering discussions in a way that connects with modern consumers who often want to engage with brands on a socially aware basis.

“At Ikea, our support for the LGBT+ community and Pride has always been more to us than a month or a marketing campaign: It is guided by our vision to create a better everyday life for the many people. That’s why we remain steadfast in our commitment to create a more loving, accepting world,” a company spokesperson said.

And while Ikea’s I-KIKI might be a one-off event, although part of a larger commitment to social issues including a raft of sustainability initiatives, such programs harness consumer attention back to the brand and hopefully encourage consumers to shop.

Across the multifaceted retail sector, just how, when or why retailers are initiating, highlighting, and communicating social responsibility programs is hard to accurately assess, as is motiva-



“You don’t want people to shy away because a brand is unfriendly, but at the same time you want to protect your brand.”

—Leon Buck,
NRF

tion and effectiveness.

“I would say about 70% of it is reactive and 30% is proactive. Many retailers have diversity inclusion programs already in place, so some of the steps they have taken are reactive to recent events, and any good retailer responds to those quickly,” said Buck.

Retailers have to keep the bottom line in mind, so socially relevant programs, be they reactive or proactive, are efforts to make consumers feel comfortable and confident that the stores they shop have values that align with their own.

The Vendor Perspective

As retailers ramp up visibility of their CSR practices to better connect with consumers, many housewares vendors are making similar efforts, as they report being approached by consumers and in some cases retailers about social issues.

“There is definitely a consumer driven demand on CSR practices. This runs through a great many aspects of how companies do business,” said Rob Kay, CEO, Lifetime Brands.

While it may not be the case with every consumer, he said being open and transparent with CSR practices does help build connections between consumers and brands.

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At A Glance: How Retailers Are Stepping Up Social Responsibility Efforts

NEW YORK— While retailers continue to carve a path out of the challenging economic climate amid the COVID-19 pandemic, they also face mounting pressure from consumers to be more transparent with corporate policies surrounding sustainability practices, as well as those focused on social equality and diversity. The following are examples of notable corporate social responsibility programs and recent updates.

Costco

The warehouse club is forthcoming on its website about its global supplier code of conduct, which prohibits human rights abuses in the retailer’s supply chain. It has an established global confidential ethics hotline for suppliers to call in order to assure compliance with its code of ethics, vendor code of conduct, and other legal and ethical policies.

The company is also vocal about its commitment to providing opportunities to qualified minority-owned and women-owned suppliers, as well as its sustainability practices.

Dollar General

The retailer’s supplier and diversity innovation summit is designed to provide companies holding a wide variety of diversity certifications that have not sold products to Dollar General within the past 18 months an opportunity to meet with its merchandise buyers and category managers. Certifications the company cited include businesses owned by women, minorities, disabled veterans, gay, lesbian, bi-sexual or transgendered people, among others.

In addition, Dollar General and the Dollar General Literacy Foundation announced a combined \$5 million pledge intended to be distributed to national and local organizations focused on literacy, education and racial and social justice.

Kroger

The grocer unveiled its 2020 environmental, social and governance report in which the company outlined progress on its Zero Hunger Zero Waste mission. Recent highlights include an update on the

company’s 4% reduction in retail food waste and 5% diversion from landfills. In addition, Kroger has reiterated its commitment to sustainable packaging via its status as the grocery sector lead partner for Closed Loop Partners’ Beyond the Bag initiative, as well as its progress on climate impact, community engagement, support during COVID-19 and its responsibilities including a \$3.4 billion investment in minority and women-owned businesses in 2019.

Target

One of the most active retailers when it comes to CSR activities, Target has been in regular communication with consumers on efforts to advance social justice and promote racial equity in its hometown of Minneapolis-St. Paul, as well as to support workers and community members through hardships they may have encountered due to COVID-19, natural disasters and other related events.

Earlier in 2020, CEO Brian Cornell kicked off the company’s pledge of \$10 million to advance social justice and support recovery efforts. Target recently established REACH, its Racial Equity Action and Change committee, tasked with shaping Target’s plan to ensure lasting social equality change within its organization.

Walmart

CEO Doug McMillon recently announced a Walmart collaboration with Shopify designed to promote healthy retail competition by helping small- and medium-sized businesses operate on its digital marketplace.

In addition, the retailer’s annual Open Call program for U.S.-manufactured products provides small businesses and entrepreneurs the opportunity to join the Walmart omnichannel community, including Sam’s Clubs. In light of COVID-19, Walmart decided to hold the event virtually and to share informational sessions on growing and managing business in today’s challenging landscape.

Kitchen Electrics

Groupe SEB, StoreBound To Accelerate Dash's Global Growth

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what our customers need. Third and most importantly, we thrive on design and innovation. Our in-house design team is constantly developing new concepts and refreshing existing products."

The Dash brand has steadily grown in the U.S., primarily due to StoreBound's focus on health and wellness cooking appliances, innovative designs and fashion-forward colorations.

"From the outset, we have defined StoreBound's success in terms of winning hearts—the hearts of our employees, our retailers, and the consumer," Dash said. "We are proving that winning hearts correlates to sales growth and profitability. During several years of meeting with potential investors, Groupe SEB immediately felt like the strongest fit from a business philosophy standpoint. They have demonstrated leadership in both innovation and corporate social responsibility while achieving outstanding financial results—all important facets of our culture at StoreBound. Both StoreBound and SEB believe in our current positioning and our partnership allows us to mutually accelerate the growth in our current markets and beyond."

In spite of the current pandemic, StoreBound has been experiencing growing sales across multiple distribution channels.

"We have been focused on building a consumer-centric healthy lifestyle brand and we are perfectly positioned for these times," Dash said. "We have always taken the approach that we are supporting the consumer. When the pandemic started to spread, we expected consumers would be cooking at home more than ever. In response, we ramped up our production, our new product development and our consumer marketing efforts to provide the maximum support possible."

"In the first quarter, we substantially increased our inventory position to meet the rise in consumer demand for home cooking tools," he added. "We have spent the last several years diversifying our supply chain and with a meaningful portion of our production now occurring outside of China, we have experienced minimal disruption as a result of the pandemic."

Dash noted, "We've been fortunate to have experienced strong growth across all of our sales channels including specialty, big box, department store, TV shopping, e-commerce and upscale mass. We work very hard to differentiate each channel while embracing opportunities to execute launches and exclusives, which is not typical in the electrics category. Our biggest opportunity continues to be growth with our existing customer base. With the number of

new products in our pipeline as well the year-over-year growth on our core products, we don't have to look for expanded distribution. We are working hard to execute for those retailers who have enabled our success up to this point."

Looking ahead to the all-important holiday season, Dash is focusing on fun products with a twist, such as unique waffle maker designs and specialized treat makers.

"We believe any tools that make cooking at home easy and enjoyable are going to be winners this holiday season," Dash said. "We have seen big increases in our air fryers, air fry ovens, waffle makers, egg cookers, bread makers, griddles, snacks and frozen treats. We recently launched new SKUs including an egg bite and pet treat maker and both seem to be off to a strong start with the consumer. We've also had a great response to our new fashion patterns on our best sellers." **HWB**



Made By Gather's new Brim 18-cup touchscreen coffeemaker.



Made By Gather Growing Craft Coffee Category Market Position

NEW YORK— Made By Gather is spotlighting the coffee category with a range of premium products designed to appeal to consumers looking to craft that personalized cup of coffee.

"We continue to be bullish about the coffee category," noted Shae Hong, founder and chief executive, Made By Gather. "Our coffee appliance business has always been strong, and the increasing demand we've seen from the pandemic really just started to take off—and it took off in a season that is usually softer in comparison to fall and holiday. We're bringing several new coffee making appliances to retail that will continue to drive excitement among consumers, and think the pour-over and espresso

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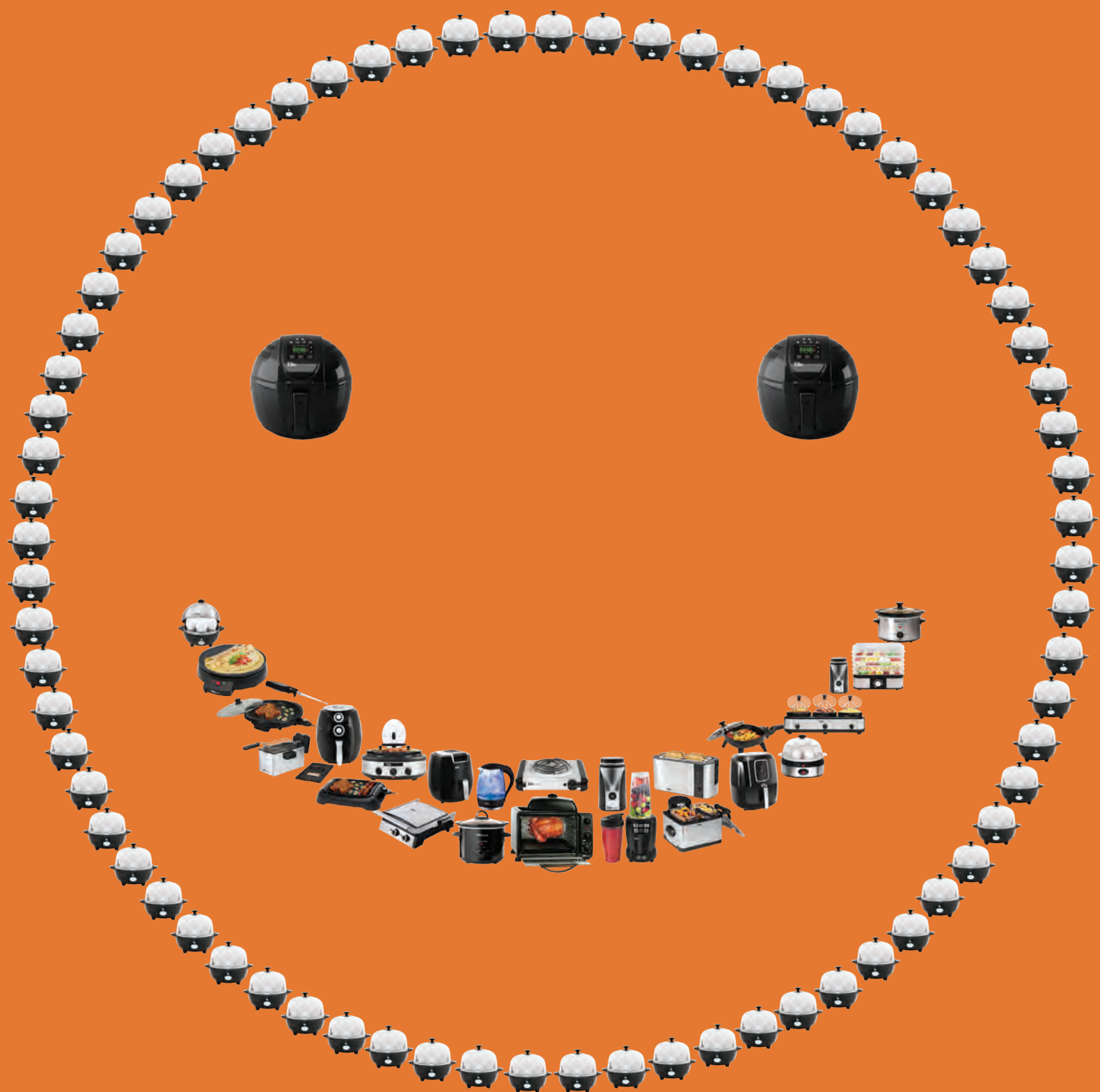
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DeLonghi Enhances Home Coffee And Espresso Experience

UPPER SADDLE RIVER, NJ—DeLonghi America is making sure that coffee-craving consumers can recreate their favorite café experience at home with new espresso appliances debuting this fall.

“With so many coffee shops still closed and consumption patterns changing, it’s the perfect time to invest in a quality at-home espresso machine,” said Doug Parkinson, coffee category manager, DeLonghi. “A newly, heightened interest and awareness around the category, along with DeLonghi’s critical new product launch, Dinamica with LatteCrema, enhances all of the best aspects of a fully automatic machine for the home and/or home office.”

“At the touch of a button, the consumer has access to 18 specialty coffee and espresso recipes, ranging from espresso to latte to an over-ice coffee,” Parkinson added. “In our campaigns, we look to educate and excite consumers about the possibilities of what they can create at home with our machines. Our social channels are a great way to learn more about our machines and our brand.”

The Dinamica with LatteCrema system is a fully automatic espresso and coffee machine and features a patented brewing unit and built in conical burr grinder for quality, freshly ground coffee, as well as an automatic frothing system to provide milk with density and texture. Suggested retail price is \$1,199.95.

Parkinson said that DeLonghi is taking a proactive approach to the business, in spite of the current pandemic. “Our

headquarters outside of Venice, Italy, was in the one the earliest and hardest hit regions of the pandemic,” he noted. “Fortunately, we have a global infrastructure and strong leadership team that was able to navigate the complexities with minimal impact.”

Debuting is the DeLonghi All-in-One Digital Combination Espresso & Drip Coffee machine, which brews two drinks at once. A 2-in-1 crema filter holder allows for both pods and ground coffee, so consumers can customize their espresso; the unit also features a digital touch screen and retails for \$299.95.

The company also is spotlighting its La Specialista, an elegantly designed, professionally-inspired espresso machine. Suggested retail is \$799.95.

Also new is the DeLonghi Stilosa EC260, featuring a 15 Bar pump and stainless steel boiler, which creates the optimal pressure and temperature to extract an authentic single or double espresso. The unit is currently available on Amazon, and will soon be offered on Target.com; suggested retail is \$99.95.

“We are looking to expand awareness for the category by leveraging our core competencies and distinct technological advantages,” Parkinson said. “We have invested in a tremendous amount of consumer research to develop rich insights into the current and potential purchaser of a fully automatic espresso machine, and we are looking to tap into these insights, along with mapping out the entire consumer journey, to deploy relevant and timely messaging on elevating the home coffee experience.” **HWB**

Capital Prepares NutriBullet, Magic Bullet Line Extensions

LOS ANGELES—Capital Brands, owner of the NutriBullet and Magic Bullet appliance brands, is extending the Magic Bullet brand into food preparation with the Magic Bullet Kitchen Express, the company’s first all-in-one mini food processor and blender.

“The popularity of home cooking is on the rise, and it’s partly due to the impact Gen Z is having on food trends and eating habits,” said Rich Krause, chief executive of Capital Brands. “The Magic Bullet Kitchen Express meets the convenience sought after by this generation.”

The launch follows the debut of the NutriBullet Juicer Pro, the company’s first overture into the juicing category.

“We’re currently working on positioning NutriBullet as a lifestyle brand that transcends everything that has to do with ‘nutrition made easy,’” said Krause. “The launch of our juicer reflects this mission as it brings to market a product that makes juicing easier—a perfect option for consumers interested in trying juicing for the first time. Not only does our standard juicer start at \$99.99, but it’s also a breeze to clean.”

The Magic Bullet Kitchen Express features a countertop-friendly compact design ideal for small spaces, and is able to chop, mix, mince, slice, shred and blend, eliminating the need for multiple appliances. With a simple turn of the dial, users can prepare everything from snacks and salads, to appetizers, entrees, desserts and more. The unit includes a 250-watt motor base, a 3.5-cup work bowl, bowl lid with a feed chute and food pusher, a stacked chopping blade, a reversible slice-and-shred disc, an extractor blend blade, two single serving cups, and a to-go lid. Suggested retail price is \$69.99.

The NutriBullet Juicer Pro contains a 1,000-watt motor, multispeed control panel with low, high, and turbo speeds, and a LED light ring. A dual-size pusher allows users to choose between a three-inch chute for whole fruits or a narrow chute for smaller produce such as celery, berries or leafy greens. The unit includes an extra-large two-liter pulp container with integrated juice bowl; as well as premium juice-storage solutions, including two-ounce and four-ounce freezer trays and two glass to-go bottles.

“Precision speeds yield maximum juice in minimal time for NutriBullet Juicer Pro users,” Krause said. The

unit includes a recipe guide focused on lower calorie, immune-boosting, skin-healthy, and kid-friendly juice options. Suggested retail is \$149.99.

“We designed the NutriBullet Juicer Pro with the philosophy that living a healthy lifestyle should be simple, easy, and accessible for anyone,” said Krause.

Krause said Capital Brands is focusing on targeted expansion of the Magic Bullet and NutriBullet brands.

“The company’s growth and expansion into other categories can be characterized as a trusted kitchen product transitioning into a lifestyle brand that permeates everything that has to do with nutrition made easy,” he said.

“Expanding into the juicing category was an area of opportunity we’re glad we were able to expand into,” he added. “It was important for the company to provide consumers with an easier juicing option. In that same vein, as more consumers lean into healthier options and cooking from home given the pandemic, we see this growing group of new home cooks as another great opportunity. It’s the main reason we’ve decided to launch a compact food processor under our Magic Bullet brand.” **HWB**



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TACO TUESDAY

Your Cinco de Mayo Headquarters

Made By Gather

continued from page 26
momentum, as well as large-format home brewers, will continue to drive growth.”

Made By Gather has seen a sharp uptick in sales on its cof-

fee products, including premium coffeemakers under the Brim brand, as well as the company's Crux and Bella brands.

“The pandemic is directly benefiting at-home coffee,” Hong said. “People drink coffee where they are, which is now at home—

not at a coffee shop or office. It's shifted the way consumers go about their routine.”

He continued, “You also have this interesting dynamic happening to the category across all income brackets—with high unemployment rates, people are

viewing at-home coffee brewing as a cheaper alternative. Then you have the people who are living relatively comfortably and are investing in the space that they now spend more time in than ever. They want their space at home to be a reflection of who

they aspire to be and are willing to upgrade.”

Hong pointed to the new Brim 18-cup Touchscreen Coffeemaker as an item that is “ideal for large families or those that will be hosting and entertaining.” The unit features an LCD touchscreen display, where the user can select regular, gourmet or bold brew options.

“All of our coffeemakers are created to be easy to use, but also sleek and modern so that you feel good about having them out on your countertop,” he added. “Through our consumer research last year, we identified an opportunity to elevate our control panel and display technology to align with changing consumer preferences.”

Made By Gather also is garnering attention for its high-quality coffee grinders, including the Brim Conical Burr Grinder.

“Brim's Conical Burr grinder delivers perfectly uniform coffee grounds every time; the high performance, fully automated design optimizes grind speed to preserve your coffee's aroma with 17 precise grind settings from Turkish mochas to French press,” said Hong.

“It's never been easier to enjoy a perfect cup of coffee at home,” Hong said. “There is now a larger group of consumers who have a deep appreciation of the process of roasting and brewing specialty coffee, which I think is in part generational and in part due to the growing number of specialty coffee offerings across multiple distribution channels.” **HWB**

Made By Gather has introduced a Brim conical burr grinder.

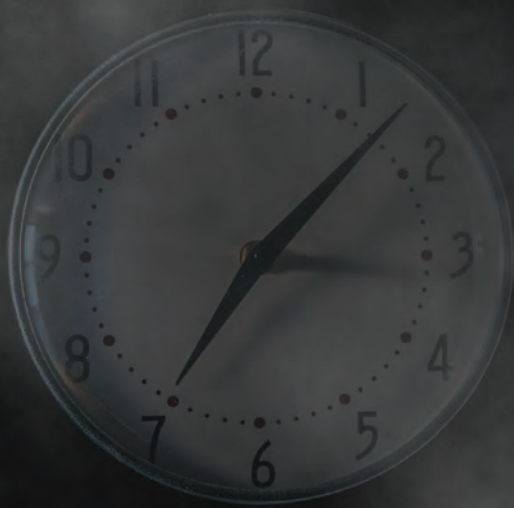


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Gourmet Coffee Trend Creating Home Roaster Sales Potential

NEW YORK— It is no secret that coffee is big business and getting bigger. This focus on quality and craft coffee is spawning renewed interest in freshness and gourmet coffee solutions, which in turn, are generating awareness of a next-generation coffee appliance: the at-home roaster.

According to the National Coffee Association USA, 63% of Americans drink coffee daily, and those coffee drinkers consume some 3.1 cups per day.

“Coffee is America’s most beloved beverage, and for good reason,” said William Murray, NCA president and chief executive. “New consumer values have changed the game for coffee. Consumers are paying more attention to what’s in their cup than ever before. And while we’re not seeing a significant change in the quantity of coffee that people are consuming, there is a clear change in the quality and consideration of each cup. Most tellingly, in 2019 the share of gourmet coffee consumed past-day reached a new high of 61%.”

“Coffee is very important to consumers and there is true passion behind it,” said Joe Derochowski, home industry advisor for the NPD Group.

Although NPD does not have sales data on this relatively new appliance category, Derochowski said that the pandemic may be driving sales as consumers look for ways to replicate their traditional coffee shop experience at home. “People are looking for activities, for things that are fun and new and different,” he said. “Given the importance of coffee, it is not surprising that people are experimenting with something new like this.”

In-home coffee roasters have gotten a bump from consumers creating their own craft coffee at home, according to suppliers.

“We’ve seen an upswing in demand for coffee appliances like bean roasters as people have more time at home and want to experiment with different hobbies,” said Maddie Frank, sales and marketing coordinator for the Metal Ware Corporation. “As people look for new hobbies to fill their time while creating that sense of comfort and normalcy of having their daily cup of coffee at home since options for going out for coffee are currently limited, we’ve seen an increase in demand for coffee bean

roasters. We’re making sure that we’re keeping our roasters in inventory to meet this increase in demand.”

Metal Ware launched a coffee bean roaster under its Nesco brand earlier this year, at a suggested retail price of \$79.99. The unit features a heating element with a preset timer that automatically shuts off at the desired preset roast; a cool down button allows users to end the roasting cycle early if they prefer a lighter roast, or something in between the presets.

“The best feature we see for our coffee bean roaster is ease of use—it has preprogrammed settings for medium and dark roasts so beginners can start right away without any trial and error,” Frank said. “Its size is also compact enough to be left on a countertop or stored in a cabinet easily when not in use.”

“Coffee creates a sense of comfort and normalcy when everything is so ‘not normal,’” she added. “People are used to meeting friends over a cup of coffee at the local café, or having coffee supplied for them at the office. Right now, in many areas, those things aren’t possible or safe so people are still finding some sense of normalcy by having their cup of coffee at home. With many people working from home, people have more free time to roast and grind their own beans as well as experiment with new techniques in making coffee.”

Newcomer Aria is launching an at-home coffee roasting unit created by inventor Glen Poss that incorporates smart technology to offer users a choice of more than 100 roasting profiles. The company also offers a subscription service delivering an expertly-curated selection of green coffee beans direct to consumers’ homes.

“The market for coffee has been evolving even before the pandemic, where people were getting to experience and then demand high quality coffee rather than what they had been convinced to expect,” said John McCann, acting chief executive of Aria. “The coffee drinker got used to going to a café and getting a flavor experience, not just a ‘hot cup of joe.’”

“Aria is leading the fourth wave of coffee, because we know that if you control the bean origin and roast profile you control the flavor,” McCann continued. “We know that coffee

flavor is not what people have grown to expect, but in fact a rainbow of flavors. Coffee drinkers are beginning to understand coffee is in fact more complex than wine, with a full spectrum of flavors.”

The Aria roaster uses a patented process that can emulate all three of the traditional coffee roasting methods: drum, fluid bed/air popper and professional pan roasting, also known as the Ethiopian coffee ceremony.

“For the freshest flavor, the time from roast to brew is critical,” said Marie McGrath-Brown, Aria’s sales and marketing executive. “All coffee is roasted at a remote location and is likely months, weeks or days old. It should be minutes or seconds.” The Aria roaster takes from three to 12 minutes to roast beans, and carries a suggested retail price of \$200 to \$250.

Nestlé also is offering a compact countertop coffee-roasting solution, the Roastelier, which is launching in Europe, “to further create customer value and enrich consumers’ experiences,” according to Reinhold Jakobi, head of Nestlé professional strategic business unit. Designed primarily for individual baristas, the system offers “hundreds of personalized blends at their fingertips, to cater to the increasing diversity of consumer tastes and desires.” **HWB**



Metal Ware points to the ease of use of its Nesco coffee roaster.

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Cook & Bake

More consumers cooking at home has led to a surge in sales, reported vendors.



Heightened Demand Pressures Cookware Supply Chain

BY EMILY CAPIELLO
Contributing Editor

NEW YORK— While the COVID-19 pandemic may have spurred the growth of cookware and bakeware in a variety of ways, the category is now up against an increasing battle of supply and demand. Retailers of differing sizes have been looking to add to their assortments or bolster holiday offerings, but suppliers have been backing down, citing too much demand and not enough product.

“The reality is that anyone in this business today— everyone is upside-down. You cannot get enough product and nobody saw it coming. I knew in good times and in bad that these categories would always be stable, but this is a whole new thing. These sales rates are not achievable,” said one vendor.

This supplier went on to explain that it has had to turn down significant business with major retailers because

there is simply not enough inventory to back up the demand.

“To make that order, I would have to pull that supply from somewhere else and I won’t be able to supply our regular customers,” the supplier said. “It’s frustrating to leave that money on the table, too, but I have to be able to have product when my customers need it.”

Added another cookware vendor, “We have put more thought into whether or not to accept new accounts in recent months. Demand is at an all-time high and our focus has been on growing existing accounts along with adding a few new accounts that we know have upside in the quickly changing retail climate.”

The pandemic, said another cookware vendor, has put lots of pressure on the cookware and bakeware segments as manufacturing has had to pivot quickly to address sourcing, social distancing, and other uncommon pressures along the supply chain. However, it has made the most sense

for this cookware company to continue to focus on its current retail partners throughout the rest of the year, a choice the company made with purpose and intent.

“For us, it’s not keeping us from opening new accounts, but we’re not focused on opening new accounts—we’re focused on supporting our current retail partners. Along with our retailer partners, we’re having an incredibly strong year, all while keeping our team members and partners safe, but the demand we’ve seen in 2020, thus far, has been simply unbelievable,” said the vendor.

The cookware vendor went on to explain that the shortage of stock has put a damper on sales this year, as many vendors have had to leave lucrative money-making offers on the table as the demand is simply too great to fulfill. However, the vendor noted, when manufacturers compare year-over-year sales, they may be pleasantly surprised at what they see.

“Given the incredible growth most brands have realized up to this point in the year, I’m sure many will realize impressive year-over-year growth

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RL Industry Primes Baking Portfolio For Future Growth

BY EMILY CAPIELLO
Contributing Editor

NINGBO, CHINA— RL Industry was founded in 2003 by Daniel Aharon and Lilly Zheng after recognizing an opportunity to purchase a small bakeware factory. The company was in financial distress, however, Aharon saw the potential in the business.

Since then, RL Industry has been investing funds into development of new products that are designed to bring increased value to customers, and currently exports both cookware and bakeware around the world.

When the coronavirus hit this year, it could have easily derailed growth plans for the company as the world economy changed. RL Industry, however, pivoted and purchased the Baker’s Secret brand from World Kitchen earlier this year.

HOMEWORLD BUSINESS® spoke to Aharon about the purchase of the Baker’s Secret brand from World Kitchen, the company’s plans for future growth and how 2020 didn’t dampen his entrepreneurial spirit.

HomeWorld Business: Why did you make the investment in the Baker’s Secret brand?

Daniel Aharon: RL Industry has been a global power in the bakeware market for several years already and we were

continued on page 42



RL Industry has acquired the Baker’s Secret brand from World Kitchen.

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SharkNinja's Ninja Foodi NeverStick 10-piece cookware set.



SharkNinja Enters Cookware Category With Foodi Sets

NEEDHAM, MA— SharkNinja, manufacturer of floor care, kitchen appliances, and kitchenware, is taking its Foodi brand to the next level with the introduction of cookware.

Dubbed the Ninja Kitchen Foodi NeverStick line, the cookware is designed to sear like stainless steel and go straight into the oven like cast iron, the company said.

According to SharkNinja, the pandemic spurred the introduction of the cookware as consumer demand for the category remains high. Additionally, the company noted that the Foodi line seemingly had fans of its own, creating the perfect storm of a launch, even for an unprecedented time.

“The first half of 2020 left people with few options for dining out as many were mandated to stay home. With the proven innovation of our previous Foodi product launches and consumer research, we knew the consumers were yearning for cookware that would stand the test of time and provide a versatile cooking experience, all at the right price. This was the opportune time for us to work to solve that problem in only the way Ninja could,” said a company spokesperson.

The cookware line has been designed to resist chipping and flaking, even if metal utensils have been used, the company said. The cookware is oven safe up to 500°F as well as dishwasher safe.

The cookware aspect, however, is

new to the Foodi brand methodology. Most of the line was developed in order to allow consumers to create healthy complex meals at home in a short amount of time. The overall line includes a pressure cooker; air fryer; grill oven; hot and cold blender; and Duo blender/juicer, but the addition of the cookware opens up the company's reach to those consumers who are looking to tap into the Foodi lifestyle but prefer more conventional means of cooking and preparing a meal.

“While many of our items simplify or speed up the cooking process, we know there are still at-home chefs who enjoy the traditional method of cooking. This new line not only complements existing products but expands the ability to create delicious meals at home that you can be proud of,” the spokesperson said.

Released through NinjaKitchen.com and most retailers who already carry Ninja products, the cookware line is also being supported through a full marketing campaign, said the spokesperson.

“As with many of our launches, we are doing a mix of traditional marketing efforts both through earned, paid and digital media. We also dropped a sizzle to showcase product usage,” the spokesperson said.

The cookware collection is available in three size configurations and are currently offered only as sets—13-piece, 10-piece and 5-piece. **HWB**

Lifetime Gets Baking With Chicago Metallic, KitchenAid

GARDEN CITY, NY— As the fall baking season is rapidly approaching, Lifetime Brands has made new additions to both its Chicago Metallic and KitchenAid lines of bakeware.

The KitchenAid aluminized steel bakeware collection is designed with extended handles that enable easy transport to and from the oven, and allow the user to get a good grip, even while wearing bulky oven mitts, the company said. Its heavy-duty aluminized steel construction is intended to promote even heat distribution and added durability to the bakeware, while the rolled rims assist in the prevention of warping and popping in the oven.

The new KitchenAid bakeware collection features a dual-layer, non-stick coating that's abrasion-resistant, and releases food easily, so baked goods won't stick to the pan, the company said. They are also dishwasher safe.

Featured in this collection: a small baking sheet, medium baking sheet, large baking sheet, cookie slider, round cake pan, square cake pan, loaf pan, 9 x 13 cake pan, 12-cup muffin pan, 24-cup mini muffin pan, 6-cup mega muffin pan and a pizza crisper. The products will be available in the middle of September.

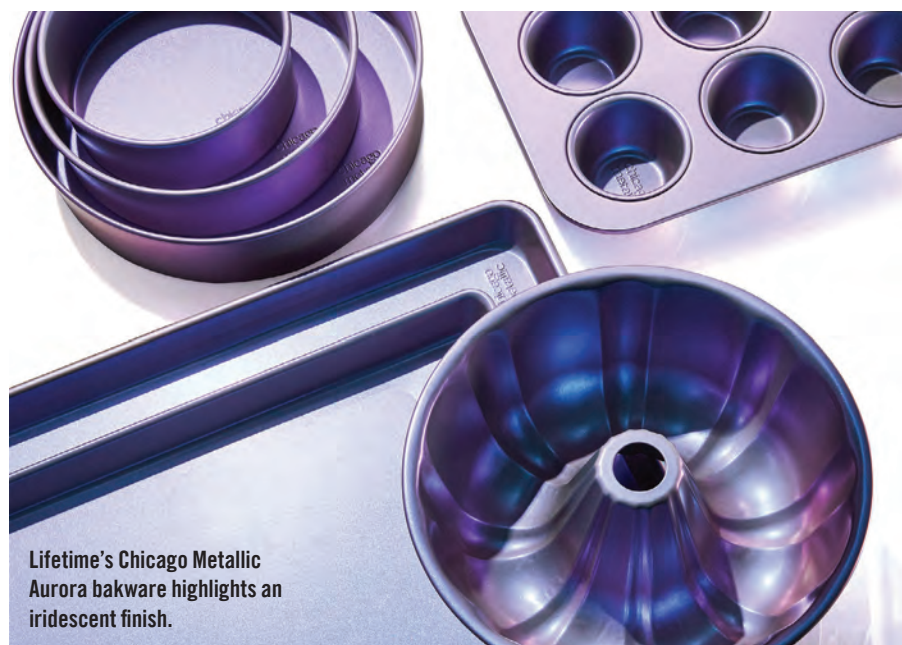
Exclusive to Chicago Metallic, the iridescent finish of Aurora bakeware is evocative of popular trends like unicorns, mermaids, and all things galactic, the company said. Designed with a unique shimmer and color-changing effect enables this collection to not only look eye-catching, but it is also intend-

ed to be durable, with a non-stick coating for easy release and clean up.

Made from carbon steel that is designed for heat conduction and even baking, Aurora bakeware is heat-safe up to 450 degrees and is also dishwasher safe, however, hand washing is recommended for best results. The Aurora collection from Chicago Metallic will begin shipping in December.

Rounding out its holiday offerings are new 3D cookie cutters from Chicago Metallic. The cookie cutters are made from stainless steel and have a rolled edge to make them safe for handling, the company said. Dishwasher safe, the sets come in a Gingerbread House theme, which includes 10 cookie cutters, or a Christmas Scene, which includes eight of the pieces. They are available now for a suggested retail price of \$9.99 per set. **HWB**

Chicago Metallic's new 3D cookie cutters help create a Christmas scene.



Lifetime's Chicago Metallic Aurora bakeware highlights an iridescent finish.

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Range Kleen Creating Right Recipe For Taste Of Home Brand

LIMA, OH— When Range Kleen introduced its Taste Of Home-branded cookware line to the U.S. market in 2018, the company knew it had something special. The cookware collection has continued to make an impression on consumers, according to Dana Swarengin, director of marketing, Range Kleen.

The collection, she said, is quite literally built around consumer demand in conjunction with the Taste Of Home brand and will continue to be imagined this way as new products are introduced into the line.

“We actually work with the brand to pull together all of the most popular recipes and that’s how we develop the products. We have the non-stick bakeware, non-stick aluminum cookware, cast iron, and stoneware and that is all built around what the consumer needs,” she said.

Taste Of Home is the first user-generated recipe publication which not only celebrates food, but also calls out the creator of the submitted recipe. Swarengin said this format gives the consumer ownership of the brand and allows them to feel invested in the overall Taste Of Home lifestyle. This, she said, has been key to the growth of the Taste Of Home assortment.

“We mimic the magazine on our packaging. Each package has a Taste Of Home recipe and we mention the consumer who submitted the recipe. So, they get a little notoriety on product, too, if they ever get a chance to see it,” she said.

Swarengin explained that going into the second year of the license, Range Kleen and Taste Of Home’s test kitchen has developed a relationship which has become a true partnership.

And, one of the benefits of that has been working closely with those in the Taste Of Home test kitchen.

“We are able to work directly with the test kitchen, and they truly test each piece and give input and make changes. They come back and are able to tell us how they would use it and what changes would help make this a better product. It truly is a collaboration of our housewares knowledge and their recipe collaboration,” she said.

Swarengin noted that after the test kitchen users get back to Range Kleen with these suggestions, the company does their best to work them in to create a product that both brands are proud of and present to the highly-engaged consumer audience.

“It’s so uplifting to see the engagement of the consumer. They truly love the brand and are truly involved with it,” she said.

And, she said, this has spurred the growth of the Taste Of Home line into different housewares categories. The company is gearing up to round out the collection with kitchen gadgets. These will include trivets; spatulas in multiple sizes; a spoonula; a basting/pastry brush; slotted spoon; regular spoon; turner; slotted turner; and bench scraper. The kitchenware will also include a 3-in-1 tool, a trivet, hot pad and jar opener.

The products will come in the brand’s signature ash and sea green colors and are available in nylon and silicone. The kitchen tools will launch on October 1.

Range Kleen also has the brand’s license for storage and organization products, which the company is looking to launch soon. **HWB**

GC Buying Group Moves 2021 Start The Year Event To Dallas

DALLAS— GC Buying Group will hold its 2021 Start the Year Member Conference and Vendor Showcase from January 6-7 at Dallas Market Center during the Dallas Total Home & Gift Market, set for January 6-12.

The annual GC conference and showcase draws retailers from across the country to review new products from vendor principals, network among peers and experience presentations from business and industry experts, according to GC.

This year’s GC Buying Group Start the Year Conference in January welcomed 200 buyers from independent retailers and 145 vendors. A schedule for the 2021 Start the Year conference, including sessions, speakers and participating vendors, will be announced in the coming months.

The hub of the 2021 event will be a GC Buying Group lounge and conference room on the second floor of the Dallas Market Center Trade Mart. Nearby trade show space will be utilized for the vendor showcase and social activities.

Janis Johnson, founder and president of GC, said, “We are honored to welcome the industry to GC’s hometown as we celebrate 40 years of service. This is going to be a special year, and we are pleased to work with a host marketplace that will provide new energy and tremendous support for all attendees. Now more than ever, independent retailers need to deepen relationships, discover what’s new and sharpen their skills to compete. The destination for gaining a business edge in 2021 will be Dallas.”

Cindy Morris, president and CEO of Dallas Market Center, said, “We

Cindy Morris,
Dallas Market
Center.



look forward to welcoming GC Buying Group stores and vendors to Dallas for inspiration and business renewal. Janis and her team share our commitment to supporting independent retail and working together to create a January event that can carry retailers forward confidently into the new year. We know that attendees will appreciate our hospitality, convenient location, wide product selection, and comprehensive health and safety protocols.”

Membership in GC Buying Group offers participation in conferences and showcases, merchandise discounts and special programs (including freight allowances and dating programs), networking opportunities and a members-only website and information exchange.

Dallas Market Center recently hosted multiple buying events, including the Total Home & Gift Market, which welcomed buyers and sellers into the buildings following strict health and safety protocols, including mandatory face coverings and temperature checks, set to continue for the foreseeable future. Supported by 97% exhibitor participation, the August home and gift market attracted 55% of the attendance, including a sharp increase in new buyers, compared with last summer’s market, according to market officials.

The Dallas Market Center is home to gourmet and kitchenware resources inside its Trade Mart and World Trade Center buildings, including permanent showroom neighborhoods in the Trade Mart for housewares and tabletop. The open-daily Gourmet Market in the World Trade Center is home to hundreds of specialty food and beverages, kitchen and wine accessories, housewares, casual tabletop and gifts. **HWB**

Janis Johnson, GC
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The demand issue is not just one that the U.S. is seeing, either. It is a global problem and one that shows no signs of slowing into the new year.

or even more. And, many of my warehouse workers use public transportation and that isn't always reliable right now, besides the risk of exposure," a manufacturer explained.

While the cookware and bakeware industries may take some time to right-side itself post-pandemic, one manufacturer explained that the limited options available at retail right now may bring in additional sales down the line.

"I believe many consumers are having favorable experiences with our brand and that's leading to additional purchases, both in the immediate timeframe and down the road," said the vendor.

And, added another cookware vendor, while suppliers may be struggling to keep up with demand now, that's not necessarily a bad problem to have as many consumers have become a bit more understanding about stock and shipping issues.

"We don't foresee this hindering the growth and demand of cookware and bakeware throughout the U.S. Manufacturers with the strongest inventory standing will fulfill those gaps and ultimately, come out of this ordeal stronger than before," the vendor said. **HWB**

Cookware Demand

continued from page 34

when they compare sales to 2019. But it might not be nearly as much as it would have been if they were in stock always on all products retailers and consumers were demanding," the vendor said.

A bakeware supplier told HomeWorld Business off the record that the company is booked with product sales through the first quarter of 2021. While that is a bright spot for the company, there is a downside— it has scaled up production to three shifts a day, seven days a week and is still unable to take on new customers and fulfill unusually large orders.

"For our business, I'm thrilled that we have been able to keep up with even a portion of the increased demand because it has meant that we are, oftentimes, the only product in stock on a retailer's shelf, meaning customers don't have another option of what to buy besides our goods," said the manufacturer.

But, another vendor said that despite the supply chain issues, it is not turning down any new accounts. Instead, it is turning away some online retailers or delaying shipments to these accounts due to the increased demand for drop-shipping from brick-and-mortar retail partners.

"Many of our retail partners are asking us to handle fulfillment for them. We weren't expecting these needs so

soon, but our team is working very hard to get us to a place where we can operate drop shipping efficiently," said the vendor.

The demand issue is not just one that the U.S. is seeing, either. It is a global problem and one that shows no signs of slowing into the new year.

"This isn't just a problem at home. This is happening in Europe, Asia and Australia. Our manufacturing plant is already booked out through March of next year. People are staying at home and cooking more. Restaurants aren't open, or people aren't comfortable eating out, and this is not going away. We have sold more niche items than

we ever have before and I think that's the reality— people are being more experimental with their cooking," the manufacturer said.

As if just having to keep up with the manufacturing process isn't enough of an issue in the cookware and bakeware segments currently, there are other logistical issues that are preventing them from being able to keep up with retailer requests. One of these is lack of workforce in the warehouse.

"I usually would have a full staff in my warehouse, but with unemployment benefits the way they are right now, many people would prefer to stay home to make the same amount



With a surge in demand, cookware vendors said they are pressed to scale up production capacity.

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RL Industry

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waiting for the opportunity to purchase a strong brand to leverage our global presence and widen our exposure. Although the global pandemic and economic crisis has initially led to a total stop of orders and many cancellations of existing ones, we used that time to invest in further designs and think about our future vision of the company. We soon realized that the world will never stop baking and in fact in such times, especially during social closures and economy recessions, people tend to bake and cook more at home, rather than eat out. And, we were proven right as two months after the pandemic started, our factory got back to 100% production. We took the opportunity that we were waiting for and purchased a brand with a global potential. We are certain that we will bring it to new heights.

HWB: What are your plans to distribute Baker's Secret products?

DA: Soon after informing our major customers around the world of the purchasing of Baker's Secret, we received requests for exclusivities for this brand. This global brand has its own unique strengths and we have the knowledge, facilities and vision to take it beyond the limits of its current presence.

HWB: What other products do you have in your company's portfolio and what are your distribution plans for them?

DA: RL designs and produces bakeware and cookware but recently, with



In addition to bakeware, RL Industry is expanding its portfolio of cookware lines.

the purchase of several global brands, we have also started designing tools and gadgets to complete its range. We plan to leverage our vertical integration of design, production and global distribution to reach new markets and offer complete ranges of kitchen products under Baker's Secret. That mainly means bakeware, tools and gadgets and storage solutions. It is going to be a thrilling time for RL.

HWB: What makes your product different than others that are out there, especially those being imported to the U.S.?

DA: RL has a large range of bakeware

products. We have to because our products are offered to different parts of the world and each area has different preferences of size, shape and color. Although we study the market and have a better sense of what can trend, we also love to challenge ourselves and the markets with new designs and concepts and let our buyers try it in their markets. No matter which products are chosen, whether it is innovative or traditional, the quality always remains our top priority. We believe that the U.S. market will enjoy a wider selection of products, new designs and traditional ones, at better price marks and as always with the highest quality.

HWB: The company was supposed to show new products at The Inspired Home Show this year— has that hindered or shifted your plans for growth in the U.S. market?

DA: There is no other way to experience a product and get to know a buyer than in real life. Obviously, the pandemic has hit us all and our plans for The Inspired Home Show this year were halted, but we believe that when one door shuts another opens. We have a clear vision about our growth in the U.S. market and we will certainly exhibit at the show next year stronger than ever. **HWB**



RL Industry also features a broad lineup of cookware.



RL Industry offers a wide range of bakeware in assorted shapes and sizes.

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Stölzle has introduced its STARlight stemware collection.

Stölzle Glassware Ramps Up U.S. Distribution Strategy

BY LAUREN DeBELLIS
Senior Editor

YORK, PA— After many years of relying on third-party entities for its U.S. distribution, which includes more than 200 gourmet retailers in the U.S. as well as Williams Sonoma, Crate & Barrel and Frontgate, among others, Stölzle recently decided to take it upon themselves to take over its U.S. distribution. This includes a company warehouse in York, PA.

Founded in Weisswasser, Germany, in 1889, Stölzle is that country's largest glass manufacturer, producing over 50 million glasses worldwide each year.

Known for its ability to produce machine-made pulled and melted stemware that results in crystal clear glasses that do not have joints or seamlines between the stem and bowl, a char-

acteristic only found in mouth blown, handmade glassware, the company's assortment is found in high-end hotels, wineries, restaurants and retailers around the world.

The company also has a significant private label business, offering custom designs and unique packaging, and also has a direct import program from its factory that is available.

Mark Roland, vp/sales and marketing, U.S. retail, Stölzle USA Glassware, noted that the brand faced an already crowded stemware category, so it decided to home in on its specialty glassware. The company produces some 50 different specialty glasses covering a wide range of cocktail possibilities, which has been trending among U.S. consumers in the last few years.

"With such a crowded stemware market in the industry, it was a chal-

lenge as they didn't have a brand presence," he said. "However, we noticed that in the factory in Germany, they have an enormous variety of specialty glasses. We decided to start there and then coattail with the stemware."

The strategy of offering good quality and moderate priced specialty glasses, and later its wine glasses, enabled the brand to make major headway with gourmet specialty stores here in the U.S., Roland said.

"Where many glassware manufacturers will do 80% stemware and 20% specialty, our mix is 40% stemware and 60% specialty, with 60% of our overall distribution to gourmet specialty stores that range from high-end chains to individual stores," he said.

While it seemed to be a challenge at first, without having a major brand presence here in the U.S., it helped the company essentially write its own story, Roland said.

The company is ramping up its efforts this year with the recent introduction of new stemware and glassware designed to appeal to the elevated tastes of American consumers.

The company has started shipping one of its newest designs, STARlight, which the company said has a seamless and deep-drawn transition between stem and goblet, as well as proportioned matching profiles. This gives the goblets of lead-free crystal glass a high degree of functionality with a harmonious appearance, the company said. The line also features a distinct

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Featuring white or black on metallic finishes, Stölzle's Olympia collection is rolling out at Frontgate.



Maple Leaf At Home's lineup includes personalized serving boards.

Sophistiplate Gains Custom Gift Line With Maple Leaf Buy

LAGUNA BEACH, CA— With its recent acquisition of Maple Leaf At Home, Sophistiplate has expanded its portfolio of home entertaining products to now also include personalized giftware such as premium serving boards, cheeseboards, glassware and additional accessories.

The Carrollton, TX-based company joins the Sophistiplate family of brands that also includes Simply Baked, Simply Serv'd and SugarPlum Party. The addition enables Sophistiplate to offer customers a more robust assortment of single-use and premium reusable products to the same table, while also staying true to the company's mission to bring people of all walks of life together at the same table to break bread.

"We're really excited to add Maple Leaf At Home to our family of premium entertaining based brands," said Daniel Seehoff, co-founder and CEO, Sophistiplate. "Maple Leaf At Home provides us an opportunity to supply customers a more robust assortment now including premium serveware and beverage ware, all proudly made in the USA."

He said that as Maple Leaf At Home's assortment of premium woods, hand-forged iron handles, and laser engraved glassware are made in the USA, the product line represents

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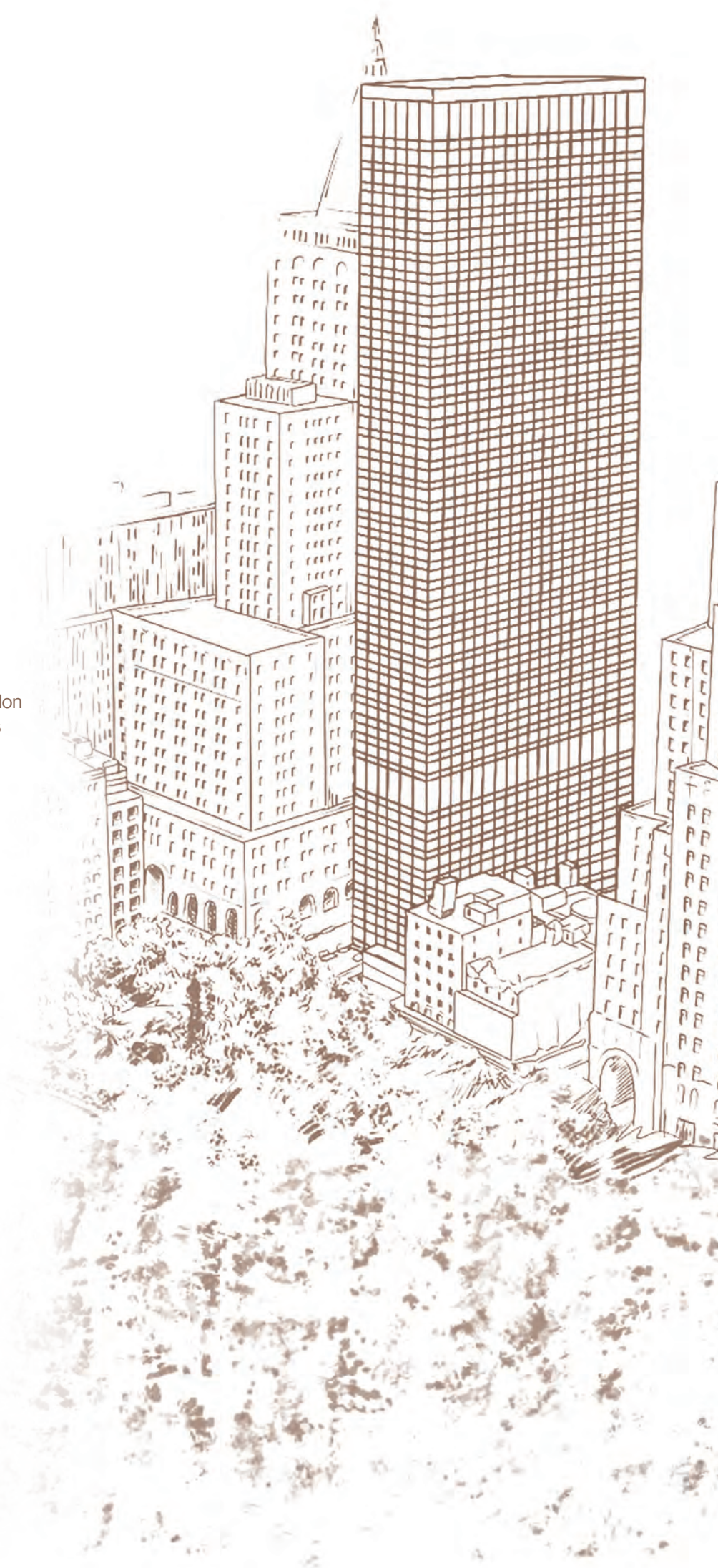
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Arte Italica, Crown Linen Bring Brand Synergies To The Table

LITTLE SILVER, NJ— With the recent merger of Italian tabletop supplier Arte Italica and Crown Linen Designs, a lifestyle brand of European textiles and accessories, the two companies plan to provide retailers and consumers with robust coordinated lifestyle presentations in a home setting.

“Merging our lines brings our table and home offerings to a level of beauty and elegance that is unmatched in this or any industry,” said Chris Collins of Arte Italica and Victoria Fanning of Crown Linen Designs, who serve as co-CEOs of the combined company. “The quality, sophistication and uniqueness of our pieces come together to complete the beauty of the table and the home.”

The co-CEOs said that the merger will enable both brands to expand their customer base within the home and gift retail industries and beyond, including their rosters of independent retailers that specialize in the mid-high range of home, gift and apparel.

Arte Italica is known for its assortment of tableware, serveware, flatware and home accessories made from ceramic, stoneware, pewter and glass, among other materials.

Meanwhile, Crown Linen Designs, partners with small, family-owned manufacturers particularly in eastern Europe, offers customers a broad assortment of linen textiles and accessories.

Collins and Fanning said the two companies have aligned to offer these coordinated, full lifestyle collections and support retail customers with enhanced merchandising and growth

opportunities.

In addition to a full selection of home textiles, Crown Linen Designs offers a selection of linen apparel including tops, dresses, bottoms, layering pieces and accessories. These apparel collections, Collins and Fanning explained, are specifically designed to work well in limited retail floor space presentations, often without dressing rooms, and have experienced success as home and gift retailers look for increased year-round and impulse sale opportunities.

This merchandised combination of apparel, home goods and accessories will help to support the full lifestyle message of the combined companies.

Upon the merger, the companies have collaborated on a 2020 linen, holiday tabletop and home décor series designed to coordinate and complement Arte Italica’s holiday collections including Natale, Bella Natale, Vetro Gold and Medici Festivo.

“These collections have already gained tremendous consumer following and are seeing an increase with loyal followers spending more time at home preparing for the holidays the past few months,” the co-CEOs said.

The brands rolled out the collections last month and will continue to present coordinated presentations on both company Instagram accounts, sharing their own and influencer ideas to encourage consumers to experiment with new and creative product combinations. **HWB**

ABOVE LEFT: Arte Italica’s Natale tableware with Crown Linen’s Natale napkin.

BELOW: Arte Italica merchandises its tableware with Crown Linen’s textiles.



Stölzle

continued from page 44
fineness with a smaller diameter and thinner walled goblet. The new series, which won a German Design award, includes a Burgundy glass, a Bordeaux glass, a red wine goblet, a white wine glass and a champagne flute.

STARlight glasses, as are all of the company's glasses, are dishwasher safe with a high breakage resistance, making them ideal for both professional and home dining.

As for its specialty glassware, which includes cocktail glasses and coupes, the company is expanding its Olympia collection which features colored glass that uses an all-natural plant dye process. The assortment includes either a white or black exterior finish with a metallic interior in either gold, silver or bronze.

The newest rollout for this collection are the tumblers, first introduced

by Frontgate earlier this year, which are now being shipped to more retailers. The tumblers hold 16.5-ounces and are dishwasher safe.

The company is also celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Glencairn scotch whiskey glass.

Stölzle is the exclusive authorized dealer by the Glencairn group representing the distillers association from Scotland for the Glencairn glass, said to be the only authorized officially designed scotch/whiskey glass in the world. **HWB**



Stölzle highlights its range of specialty glassware, such as the New York collection.



Stölzle is celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Glencairn scotch whiskey glass.



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Sophistiplate has added Maple Leaf At Home's custom glassware and serving boards to its lineup.

Sophistiplate

continued from page 44
quality American craftsmanship.

"Being able to produce locally here in the U.S. at an affordable price gives our customers a unique and proud way to differentiate their

assortment, and also allows us a greater speed to market, all while creating more American jobs," Seehoff said.

In addition to the appeal of its Made in the USA status, Seehoff said that being able to offer personalization to customers has been a

goal and initiative Sophistiplate has been working on for quite some time.

"Personalization is a truly special and unique way to offer differentiation with premium gifts and products," he said. "We are excited by the additional doors this will open for us, including registry opportunities, corporate gifting, and more."

Seehoff also said the company plans to continue to focus Maple Leaf At Home products to the specialty and independent channel, offering premium and differentiated products to specialty retailers that uphold this aesthetic with a focus on quality products.

The company said it plans to consolidate all marketing, sales and operational functions in the next few months, and will share their new categories with its existing customer base in specialty gift, gourmet grocery, and housewares.

Sophistiplate, founded by Daniel Seehoff and his father Gary, former chairman, CEO and founder of Evriholder Product, entered the market in 2016 with its line of premium disposable table paper products. The assortment includes chargers, various sized plates and accessories, designed to be mixed-and-matched for everyday and holiday entertaining.

Since its initial launch, the company has added disposable flatware into the mix, as well as disposable cutting/serving boards. In 2018, it acquired Simply Baked, a company that designs disposable entertaining items such as serveware, barware, cookware and bakeware, and includes eco-friendly and bio-degradable options.

In 2019, Sophistiplate launched SugarPlum, a more value-driven line of paper entertaining goods and accessories. **HWB**

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S'well Sustains Growth Amid Changing Consumer Landscape

NEW YORK— It has been ten years since the S'well brand of hydration and food storage entered the marketplace with its 17-ounce triple insulated Ocean water bottle. And since 2010, company founder and CEO Sarah Kauss, said the consumer landscape has certainly changed.

"As our lives have gotten busier, convenience has become ever more important. Individuals wanted easy ways to live life on the go 10 years ago, but today they want convenience with a conscience and convenience that adds value to their experience," she said. "Reusables have the opportunity to do this, especially brands like S'well that offer design, performance and purpose in a wide range of products. We make choosing to live sustainably easy."

Since its founding, the company said it has launched 30 different products, hundreds of designs and helped displace over four billion single-use plastic water bottles.

In addition, S'well has also been transparent about its charitable efforts and commitment to the environment over the years.

To date, the brand has committed \$1.7 million to UNICEF and recently donated \$1 million worth of products to health care heroes, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the company became a Certified B Corporation earlier this year.

"Transparency is simply a best practice, no matter what business you're in. Consumers are demanding transparency and making buying decisions accordingly," she said. "S'well became a Certified B Corporation this year to continue our commitment to evolve our sustainability and responsible business strategy. We're eager to keep evolving our impact on the world over the next 10 years."

As it celebrates its anniversary and looks ahead to the future, the company has also embarked on a new social media campaign called "Decade of You."

The campaign is designed to give S'well bottle owners a platform to share their own stories of where they have taken their S'well bottles, how they have used them, as well as their personal commitments to sustainability. Content includes videos, giveaways, sustainability statistics and messages from Kauss.

S'well has also launched its fall/holiday 2020 catalog that features several new designs and products. The

Traveler is the brand's latest bottle shape designed to fit the contour of the hand. It also features a wider mouth that can accommodate ice cubes or for stirring a cup of coffee. As with all of S'well's bottles, it is triple-layered, vacuum insulated and designed to keep beverages colder or warmer for long periods of time.

The Traveler comes in 12-, 16- and 20-ounce sizes, in a variety of designs including Pyrite, Geode Rose, Moonstone, Onyx, Teakwood, Azurite and additional styles.

In addition, S'well has expanded its food storage assortment to now include licensed Disney characters Mickey and Minnie Mouse. Each container holds 24 ounces and coordinates with S'ip by S'well bottle designs that also feature Mickey and Minnie Mouse. **HWB**



S'well's Traveler bottle in moonstone and pyrite designs.

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Epoca Expands Tasty And Goodful Kitchenware Brands

BY LAUREN DeBELLIS
Senior Editor

BOCA RATON, FL— Following the 2018 launch of social media platform BuzzFeed’s food-centric Tasty licensed line of housewares at Walmart, Epoca International has expanded the assortment with new kitchenware, cookware and accessories.

“Epoca International’s licensed brand Tasty, from BuzzFeed, continues its extremely successful exclusive partnership with Walmart as it grows and expands with new and refreshed product offerings,” said Josh Melzer, vp/marketing, Epoca. “2020 saw an invigoration of design for a large number of items across the cookware, bakeware, gadget

and cutlery categories. The design elements for Tasty’s new products were formed by feedback from their massive network of engaged fans.”

Melzer noted that the Tasty brand reaches over 11 million unique monthly users on Facebook and Instagram. As such, Melzer said the brand was able to garner not only feedback and product suggestions about their additional offerings, but learned of new opportunities for development as well.

Launched to meet the demand of the Millennial consumer market and to bring the fun back into cooking, the line is designed to translate the Tasty brand into kitchenware, and as such the products are available in a variety of colors, including the signature Tasty blue shade.

The original launch included more than 100 SKUs across cookware, bakeware and kitchen gadgets. The latest introduction expands upon the initial rollout with new specialty kitchen tools designed based on the feedback the brands received from consumers.

For example, Melzer said that comments on Tasty recipe videos discussed customer pain points around chopping, the need for multiple containers for chopped veggies, and clean up after. As a result, Epoca designed the Tasty Cut-

ting Board Prep Station with removable trays. The prep station features four removable prep trays which click into place within the board when chopping, as well as multifunctional components like herb strippers, strainers, graters and more.

In addition, Melzer said almost all Tasty gadgets have been entirely redesigned from the bottom up, with most featuring multi-use opportunities, such as a solid turner with a built-in grater, a soup ladle with measure marks, oversized jumbo turner for pancakes, and a garlic press for mincing or slicing.

New color assortments and product design elements are also featured in cookware offerings, including a new pink Dutch oven.

Epoca and BuzzFeed are also expanding the licensed line of Goodful housewares into new premium outlets. Goodful is BuzzFeed’s health and wellness brand.

To meet the demand, Epoca has developed new offerings in the food storage and beverage segments for Goodful that complement a growing range of products across cookware, bakeware, gadgets and cutlery.

The new Goodful items were each designed based on research conducted through the comments and feedback garnered from the Goodful fan base, across social media and reviews on e-commerce platforms where the products are already sold, Melzer said.

New featured items include the



Epoca has redesigned its Tasty kitchen gadgets to add in more multi-use functions.

Goodful Salad Container that includes removable internal trays and enhanced locking and carrying mechanisms. Other items include vacuum sealed insulated food jars and reusable bags.

“Through the partnership with Goodful, a large amount of online content has been created to support the products,” Melzer said. “As a digital-first brand, Goodful is uniquely positioned to leverage brand heritage as its physical products expand across the online landscape. Goodful has also partnered with brand influencers to bring the latest hacks, tips and tricks directly to the consumer with social posts and editorial articles to further support its momentum.”

The new and expanded assortment of Goodful items are currently in stock and available for shipping with additional new products in production. **HWB**



Epoca's new Tasty cutting board prep station with removable trays.



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Allstar Accelerates Performance-Driven Marketing Model

HAWTHORNE, NY— To Allstar Innovations CEO Scott Boilen, the coronavirus pandemic in just a few months has accelerated direct-to-consumer e-commerce by suppliers and retailers by as much as 10 years.

And it has validated, Boilen said, a strategic move begun by Allstar a few years ago to advance a “performance driven” marketing model combining direct-response TV, Internet and social media to build brands with a longer life potential compared to one-off items featured in the more traditional As Seen On TV model.

“A lot of our best practices and skill sets,” Boilen said, “Came into play during the pandemic: Our ability to innovate, to manufacture and scale up, to source all over the world, to have a diversified fulfillments center and our reputation with retailers at a senior level. Everything on the value chain. We could really lean into many years of learning.”

While identifying and marketing

unique TV-to-retail items continues as an opportunity-based staple at Allstar, the company has shifted a lot of its developmental emphasis more recently to brands such as Calming Comfort/ Calming Heat (therapeutic accessories) and Mission (performance cooling textiles) positioned as extendable in-line retail anchors that receive an extra lift from direct-response media.

The advantage of such an approach became even clearer during the pandemic, Boilen said. “We’ve had product properly positioned for where consumers would see it, whether online or in stores of essen-



“We’ve had product properly positioned for where consumers would see it, whether online or in stores of essential retailers.”

—Scott Boilen,
Allstar Innovations

tial retailers,” he said.

Boilen added heightened TV and digital media consumption by home-bound consumers during the pandemic was a boon to a wide range of DRTV products for which inventory was readily available. “Good product became great product,” he said.

He also acknowledged the fortuitous timing of Allstar’s deeper dive into comfort and fitness-related brands and

products, which started well in advance of a global health crisis that further illuminated the importance of personal wellness. The company ramped up marketing support for Mission cooling neck gaiters as a higher-performance face covering, which Boilen said has been a key “tipping point” to getting people involved with a

continued on page 54



Allstar is rolling out the new Touch Screen purse.

Emson Extends Granitestone Cookware Line

NEW YORK— Emson is rolling out a hard-anodized aluminum extension of its DRTV-supported Granitestone non-stick cookware.

The Granitestone Diamond Pro series showcases a triple-layer non-stick coating infused with titanium and diamonds. The hard-anodized cookware goes through a catalytic process that results in corrosion-resistant exteriors and increased durability, according to Emson.

Thicker-gauge (2.5-mm) aluminum contributes to quick, even heating and premium searing performance, according to the company.

The dishwasher-safe cookware features cool-to-the-touch (on stovetop) stainless steel handles and tempered glass lids. The cookware is designed to be oven safe up to 500 degrees Fahrenheit.

The new Granitestone Diamond Pro Series is featured as a 13-piece set with a \$199 retail price. Set pieces include 8- and 10-inch frying pans; a 12.5-inch chef pan; a 3-pint sauté pan with lid; 1.5- and 3-quart saucepans with lids; and 2.5- and 6-quart pots with lids. **HWB**



Emson's Granitestone Diamond Pro hard anodized cookware series.

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Ontel Leverages Demand For Essential Household Products

FAIRFIELD, NJ— Craig Jordan, svp/ sales and customer solutions for Ontel Products, said the As Seen On TV marketer has leveraged increasing demand for utilitarian household items during the pandemic.

“Items that fulfill a need have always been a driver of the As Seen On TV category, pandemic or not,” Jordan said, noting the strong sales of the company’s TV-backed Arctic Air personal cooler during a hotter-than-usual summer in many regions.

Jordan noted such practical, advertised items also benefitted from strong, forward positions in mass retailers that remained open as essential businesses during the initial lockdown months of the pandemic.

In an overall As Seen On TV marketplace that pre-COVID was seeing retailers concentrate everyday presentations and features in the category on the best-selling items, Jordan said heightened TV shopping activity by homebound consumers helped drive items expected to be more moderate performers.

“The middle-of-the-road items took advantage of more viewing

eyeballs,” he said.

A big question for As Seen On TV marketers and their retail customers turns to whether the category’s first-half surge will continue through the all-important back half.

“The wild card— the unknown— is if people will flock to physical retail outlets for the holidays like they usually do; or will they remain committed to online transactions,” Jordan said. “The good news is I think our key retail partners are much more prepared to service the consumers online at levels they would in store with this new model.”

Ontel, as a veteran direct marketer and fulfillment provider, also is well prepared to pivot as needed for its retail customers, Jordan said.

“We have been able to work the model out to where we can supply their consumers directly so they’re never out of stock,” he said. “This pandemic gave us the opportunity to test those scenarios, and we’re in a good spot.”

Jordan also announced Ontel, bolstering its organization in response to its growth, has brought in housewares veteran Devin Hanna as vp/sales. **HWB**



“Items that fulfill a need have always been a driver of the As Seen On TV category, pandemic or not.”

—Craig Jordan,
Ontel Products

Allstar

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brand added to the company’s portfolio last year through a joint venture with Mission founder Chris Valletta. Allstar also plans what Boilen said he expects to be a breakthrough extension of the Calming Heat brand.

Meanwhile, Allstar is rounding out its DR-to-retail offering with several new items:

The Vasta spins and slices vegetables and fruits into sheets that can be prepared as low-carb alternatives to lasagna pasta noodles, wraps and more. Equipped with separate blades for lasagna- and fettuccine-style noodles, Vasta retails for \$19.99 and will be backed by a content-rich campaign featuring food influencers, Boilen said.

Allstar’s Touch Screen Purse, created by entrepreneur Tami Lange and backed by Lori Greiner of Shark Tank, is a cross-body purse that protects a mobile phone while keeping it accessible and usable. Touch Screen Purse retails for \$19.99.

Happy Nappers Play Pillows are plush animal pillows that convert to sleeping blankets. Offered in rainbow unicorn and gray shark styles, machine-washable Happy Nappers retail for \$39.99. **HWB**

Ontel Launches TV-Backed Product Portfolio For Fourth Quarter

FAIRFIELD, NJ— Ontel is highlighting a number of key fourth quarter TV-backed products:

Star Belly Dream Lites are plush animals with glowing belly nightlights that project rotating starry effects in six colors that show onto walls. The

national rollout of Star Belly plush animals spotlights a blue puppy and pink unicorn among a collection of available characters.

Battery Daddy is a portable two-sided case that stores and organizes up to 180 batteries: 78 AAs, 64 AAAs, 8 9-volts, 10 Cs, 12 Coin Cells and 8 Ds. The laptop-sized carry case easily fits in drawers, cabinets and shelves. The case includes a built-in battery tester, and each side has a clear, locking lid. Battery Daddy retails for \$19.99.

Ontel has expanded its Huggle Hoodie collection of lined wearable blankets to include socks and scarves.

Ontel’s Magic Tracks toy race cars sets with bendable tracks are being offered in limited edition sets, including fire rescue, police and monster trucks.



Ontel’s Star Belly Dream Lites pink unicorn (above) and Battery Daddy storage case.



Allstar’s Vasta spins and slices vegetables and fruits (above); and Happy Nappers plush animal play pillows.

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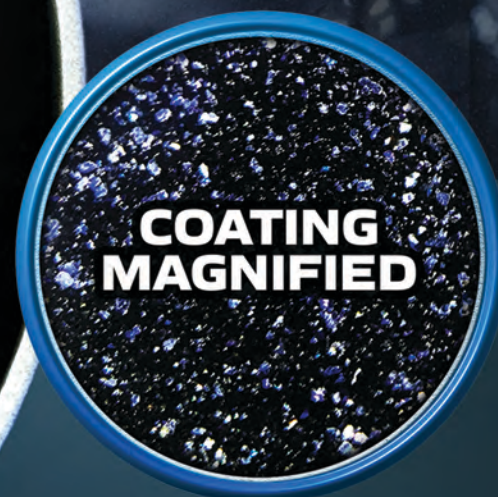


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Men's Grooming Sales Surge Driven By Do-It-Yourself Market

BY DONNA BOYLE SCHWARTZ
Contributing Editor

NEW YORK— Sales of men's grooming tools— including shavers, clippers, trimmers and accessories— are surging, as consumers eschew barber shops and salons in favor of a do-it-yourself approach to hair and facial care.

“Our categories, especially trimmers and clippers, have had unprecedented, unforeseen growth; 30 to 35% year-to-date and product moving off shelves just about as fast as we can supply,” said Steven Yde, vp/Wahl International. “People want to look their best and even if someone did not shower that morning and is wearing a ball cap for that Zoom call, they are maintaining their facial hair and still need to cut their hair, so it has been a boom. It is that normalcy people look for in a crazy world. We believe as long as state gov-

ernments close businesses and people are concerned, we will most likely see this surge continue.”

Joe Derochowski, home industry advisor for the NPD Group, agreed that personal care appliances are selling well, pointing to facial trimmers and body groomers as two top-performing categories. “More people have been growing beards over the past few years, making a personal statement about ‘who I am: independent, rugged, a rebel,’ and those beards require grooming,” he noted. “There is a big difference between casual and overly casual, and people still want to have a clean look, especially with the growth in virtual meetings.”

A recent survey conducted by Philips Norelco found that 54% of consumers cut their own hair at home and 76% said that they will likely cut their hair at home post-COVID.

“With stay-at-home mandates and local barber shops closed, men have been forced to take on grooming themselves,” said Ivone Miranda, senior marketing activation manager, male grooming, U.S., Philips. “As a result, the men's grooming business has seen an increased demand for at-home grooming products.”

The Philips Norelco Multigroom features 25 pieces, including a metal trimmer, a foil shaver, a detail metal trimmer, and a nose and ear trimmer, all boasting DualCut technology and self-sharpening blades.

“The male grooming category is surpassing all of our expectations and performing above average. The Philips Norelco male grooming category grew 30% year-over-year solely due to the demand in grooming tools caused by the coronavirus pandemic,” Miranda added.

Michael Cohen, vp/sales and division head for Best Accessory Group, said sales of its Westinghouse grooming tools have been soaring. “Shavers, hair dryers, beard trimmers— anything in the men's grooming category is just



Wahl said it has seen strong demand for men's grooming tools.

flying out the door,” he said. “Demand has been so strong that we are now forecasting extended delivery dates.”

Jonathan Schaefer, divisional vice president, marketing home and personal care, Spectrum Brands, has seen a surge in its Remington product line due to the increasing popularity of grooming at home. “There has been tremendous interest in do-it-yourself hair cutting at home, and we have seen strong increases across the board in our men's grooming portfolio,” he said. “We have seen a huge demand for our hair cut kits, because people are still very apprehensive about going out, and our Remington products provide good quality at affordable prices.”

Bruce Bock, senior manager of corporate communications, Andis, said, “The global pandemic has created significant changes in men's grooming. With COVID-19 shutting down barbershops, we have seen strong interest in our at-home products, especially the Select Cut 5-speed combo home hair-cutting kit and the Headliner combo 27-piece haircutting kit. Both options include everything consumers need to cut their hair at home.”

“To address this shift in the market, we have focused on ensuring our at-home products are accessible— both through greater inventory as well as a strong focus on education for those who are new to clipping,” Bock added. “Social media tools, such as Facebook and Instagram Live, have proved invaluable. Additionally, we have free,

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Garment Care Stays Versatile In The Face Of Challenges

NEW YORK— Americans these days seem to have traded Oxford shirts, silk blouses and dress pants for t-shirts, shorts and sweatpants, much to the detriment of the garment care category. Although some home appliances have benefited from stay-at-home orders, sales in irons, steamers and accessories have taken a plunge during the pandemic.

“Sales in garment care are down, because people are not going into work, and not going out for leisure; even the portable market is down because no one is traveling,” said Joe Derochowski, home industry advisor for the NPD Group. “The future is going to rely on people going back to work, back to school and traveling.”

David Briganti, senior product manager, garment care, Groupe SEB, which owns Rowenta, acknowledged that this is a tough time. He said, “The reality is, the category as a whole is off 25% year-to-date, but the category has been soft over the last few years, not just due to the pandemic. The growing popularity of wrinkle-free fabrics and athleisure wear has resulted in decreases of 4% to 5% over the last few

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Rowenta has launched its Velocity iron series to reach the premium market.



With more consumers still staying at home, Spectrum's Remington brand has grown sales of its clippers, trimmers and haircutting kits.

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'Queer Eye' Show Inspires New Dorel Furniture Collection

BY MIKE DUFF
Executive Editor

MONTREAL— Dorel Home has partnered with 'Queer Eye' creators Scout Productions to create a fashion-forward multi-room furniture collection inspired by the Netflix television series.

In the deal, brokered by IMG Licensing Worldwide, the QE collection launched exclusively on Walmart.com in North America on July 15 featuring updated industrial designs for living room, bedroom, office, dining room and outdoor patio spaces.

The rollout followed the recent debut of the seven-time Emmy Award winning Queer Eye series' fifth season on Netflix. The series introduces viewers to its Fab Five designers and connoisseurs: Antoni Porowski, Bobby Berk, Karamo Brown, Jonathan Van Ness and Tan France.

Dorel Home conceived the Queer Eye furniture to capture the aesthetic and spirit of the Fab Five and what the show represents, said Claudia Grundman, Dorel senior director, brand management.

In execution, the Dorel Industries division, in close collaboration with a team at Walmart, developed a furni-

ture collection that offers consumers unique, stylish and affordable products. She noted that the collaboration between the producers, licensing company, Walmart and Dorel had been essential in the creation of a QE product line that provides consumers with aspirational furnishings at prices they already can afford. Although Queer Eye focuses on individual projects and people, Grundman said Dorel used the general design sensibility the cast personifies to develop the products in the collection.

"It has been very exciting," she said.



"It's a feel-good show. It's all about helping others and lifting them up. Walmart, being who they are, brings the best prices. We came in to build a brand at a very strong pricepoint with quality and giving it the look and feel that the Fab 5 would have on their show."

The collection launches in a modern industrial style, Grundman said, but as it grows, Dorel will introduce additional design themes. Already planned is furniture in a nostalgic mid-century look that will bring in elements from other related eras, she said, as well as a "mood-boosting" take on Boho and a warm Scandinavian look. Although it incorporates designated design themes, Dorel is crafting its Queer Eye furniture so that consumers can mix and match across styles and still create coherent home décor themes.

The company developed the QE collection as one that would appeal as broadly as the television show rather than to specific demographics, as was the case with its CosmoLiving and Novogratz lines, Grundman noted. The Queer Eye collection will grow beyond the current core with furnishings for even more spaces under development. Dorel is working with other Queer Eye licensees to ensure that any shopper intrigued by the label will discover a cohesive presentation across all product categories they maintain, she said. **HWB**

Bed Bath & Beyond and Decorist have curated several rooms, such as Low-Key Bohemian, as part of its College from Home initiative.



Bed Bath Brings Design Focus To 'College From Home' Program

By Mike Duff
Executive Editor

UNION, NJ— Bed Bath & Beyond has taken a designer approach when looking at the back to school/college season and enlisted its Decorist division to help it create a curated product presentation for our times, dubbed "College from Home."

As students approach what will be a unique school year, College from Home provides essentials including lap desks, organization tools, accessories and furnishings that can turn bedrooms and other designated spaces into learning environments. In addition to relevant, value-driven products, Bed Bath & Beyond also wants to lend effective advice, solutions and a College Savings Pass, which gives students and their parents who sign up 20% off an entire purchase every time they shop in-store or online through September 30.

The retailer launched the initiative with help from its Decorist online interior design business as a focused aid for parents and their college students re-designing bedrooms as remote learning spaces. Although aimed at college

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Linon's bucket chair with gold spider base suits the glam design trend.



Linon Powell Expands Home Office, Casual Dining Lineup

MINEOLA, NY— Linon Powell is building new products on past success in its ready-to-assemble furniture lineup, with an eye in the present coronavirus-impacted marketplace on office and casual dining.

As with many RTA furniture manufacturers, Linon is taking products that have proven successful and producing new takes as a way to stay in touch with evolving consumer style preferences while revisiting products that have proven popular. The approach is advantageous at a time when businesses are taking a cautious approach to markets.

The vendor has been in the forefront of an important office chair growth trend. Rolling office chairs built over casters have taken off in the mass market in part because Linon Powell has introduced varied styles and treatments that have proven popular with consumers. The caster bases give the chairs ease of maneuverability in restricted spaces while making them convenient to roll where needed when consumers require additional seating.

At the same time, by applying a variety of fabric treatments and finishes, Linon Powell has given its range of office chairs residential looks that consumers can pick and choose as they coordinate home decor across the array of furnishings that support their lifestyle.

In fact, Rosanne La Rosa, vp/merchandising for the company, said Linon Powell can't keep its office chairs in stock. Indeed, home office continues to win the attention of consumers.

"Anything for a home office is hot," she said.

The company has added some 25 new SKUs to its home office lineup. Among them, the company has introduced a trend-right Boho variation on its successful Draper chair, La Rosa noted, which gets a boost from its Sherpa upholstery fabric. In addition, Linon Powell is debuting a bucket chair in velvet with gold spider base that suits the glam trend as it plays out in the marketplace today.

Casual dining has enjoyed significant growth for many reasons. Lifestyle plays a role. Although some still prefer formal dining, both for family and entertainment occasions, many consumers have embraced casual mealtimes as a more relaxing and varied alternative.

Linon Powell has been reconsidering the range of its casual dining options. Most recently, it has updated its best-selling tavern set, offering a lighter finish offset by brushed silver elements. LaRosa said the company has noticed that light wood finishes are selling well today and so wanted to further capitalize on the trend. **HWB**

College From Home

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students, the program certainly offers advantages to high school or even younger students facing a year when instruction may be primarily or exclusively taken at home.

Bed Bath & Beyond previously tapped Decorist for a design-oriented project focused on a still-younger demographic. In May, Decorist worked with the company's buybuy Baby brand to launch Design Squad, a one-stop shop for consumers looking to set up a nursery that supplies curated nursery designs, advice, expert Q&A and other relevant content as well as a custom room design service.

As part of College from Home, Bed Bath & Beyond organized a curated assortment of products plus space-creation advice through a dedicated website section. Decorist is providing expertise that will help College from Home become a room design resource for consumers who confront assembling a functioning learning environment in their households.

"The College from Home initiative was the perfect opportunity to create a unique service to help students set-up their study-at-home space," said Dominic Pendry, vp/communications at Bed Bath & Beyond.

The design team at Decorist created three virtual rooms students can check out for inspiration as they organize their own spaces. The Chill Camp Vibes room creates a natural and rustic atmosphere, with muted colors and outdoorsy elements meant to call camping trips to mind. The Low-Key Bohemian space is bright but still cozy, with vintage-inspired furnishings set off by cool modern touches. Modern Glam emphasizes pink and gold embellished by plush, fluffy accents, all

deliberately assembled to establish a mature, chic look.

Among the topics College from Home addresses are creating a cohesive room look, advising students to think about the kind of designs they might prefer and to draw inspiration from the evaluation process, and self-expression, as in adding artwork and décor not only make a space stand out, but also to act as a backdrop for interactive video classes. Topics also touch on style preferences, appropriate seating, lighting, comfort, organization and even snacking habits.

Decorist provides a style quiz to help students get a sense of where to take their rooms, and Bed Bath & Beyond even will connect those interested with an online designer.

College from Home curated assortments can help simplify the shopping process as students and their parents organize functional home study spaces. Although many will be back under the parental roof studying, College from Home also can help students who are living in dorms or apartments for the school year, either full time or part time. Many colleges are back in session but not bringing all students on campus at all times to maintain social distancing.

"We have already seen customers come to us to help convert living spaces to work spaces, and we believe this trend will continue," Pendry noted.

In July, desks and office chair searches on Bed Bath & Beyond's website increased more than 200% versus the same period last year, he pointed out, with college students adapting to their new learning reality among those shopping.

"We're continuing to monitor the situation and developing new ways to serve our customers to make it easy to feel at home throughout this period," Pendry said. **HWB**



The Chill Camp Vibes room is part of Bed Bath's College from Home design program.

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A minimal black and white pattern highlights CB2's Kara Mann bedroom collection.

CB2/Kara Mann

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However, it also can generate all-new products that can take something from established style palettes, and so maintain a consistency with an existing assortment, while introducing elements not before incorporated.

The collection is innovative not only to design but to execution: The upholstery in the collection is made domestically and will be part of a CB2 custom product program that will give consumers a choice of fabrics selected by Mann.

The starting point for the Kara Mann collection, Ryan Turf, CB2 president, told **HOMEWORLD BUSINESS**®, was admiration for the partner, which is consistent with collaborations the retailer has initiated in the past.

"Over the years, we've partnered with aspirational and inspirational brands like GQ, goop, Lenny Kravitz and Jennifer Fisher," he said. "We look for someone that has a strong vision in home and discerning, great taste. I'm a longtime fan of Kara's work. We were introduced through mutual friends and instantly connected over our shared passion for all things design. Kara has a reputation for pushing boundaries, so we're looking forward to bringing this high design collection to both consumers and designers alike."

For her part, Mann said her familiarity with CB2 and its attitude about design had a particular resonance, and she was able to take an intuitive approach to the collection in collaboration with the retailer.

"CB2 has been a go-to brand for my clients and me personally for years," she said. "They are forward thinking in their design approach but also fun.

You know you're going to find something unique and inspiring. I've always loved the thrill of the hunt, and CB2 makes that part of their brand. As for the design process, my gut was telling me to relive the '80's and the first room I ever decorated, my teenage bedroom. We sketched, pinned up, shuffled and stirred the design pot a bit. We incorporated new materials with classic forms and picked and pulled textiles that inspired us when visiting CB2's offices."

Turf noted that CB2's Kara Mann Collection is a collection that offers vision and depth yet also has a fittingly novel edge to it.

"Kara's work is unexpected and a little unorthodox," he said. "Similarly, CB2 delivers products that are sophisticated yet with a strong creative edge. Together, we've created a collaboration that leads with quality and design, but is accessible enough to be mixed in with our customer's personal style, and at approachable pricepoints."

The collection uses materials in a fresh modern way, Turf noted.

"For example," he noted, "the glass in the collection is ultra clear, so there is no green edge, and then we painted it white for a cool and refreshing look. I also love the elevated look of our pitted platinum, rough cast aluminum with pits and cast lines that give a luxe polished platinum finish an unexpected mix."

Turf characterized Mann as a creative visionary who brings the trained eye of a respected interior designer to the collection.

"I think any design aficionado will recognize the edginess and high quality of each piece in this collaboration," he said.

While making a design statement with the collection, CB2 also wanted to ensure the products involved resonated

with interior designers and consumers. The retailer incorporated feedback, especially from designers who have let the retailer know they are often looking for bigger rugs.

"We recently launched a small offering of larger rug sizes," Turf said. "With this collaboration, we are expanding that offering as both of the Kara Mann rugs will scale all the way up to 10 by 14, allowing designers to fill spaces on a larger scale."

The development of the collection gave CB2 the chance not only to provide consumers with an attractive and exciting product collection but also to explore new approaches to design and construction.

"Working with Kara Mann on this new collection allowed us to explore a wide range of new techniques and materials such as the tonal swirl resin, slubbed sateen upholstery and silk lamp shades, as well as new styles like the slipcovered sofa, ruffled edge console and two-tone resin and pitted platinum dining table to continue on a path of elevating our products. Moving forward, we're excited to continue integrating materials like ultra clear glass, marble-ized resin and pitted platinum in a sophisticated and modern way," Turf said.

In its work with outside brands and designers, CB2 has maintained its focus on core customers and their preferences. The retailer brings newness expressed within a context that suits customers, existing and potential.

"CB2 customers are creative, curious, urban-minded individuals that want their homes to be a reflection of their personality," Turf said. "Working with brilliant collaborators from all different backgrounds ensures a range of styles and attitudes that appeal to both current and new customers, allowing us to deliver on high design at approachable pricepoints." **HWB**

FROM TOP: A minimalist sensibility and mix and match designs highlight the CB2 Kara Mann collection.

Kara Mann styled the lighting in the line with neutral colors and textures.

Upholstery in the collection is made in the U.S. and comes with a custom fabric program.



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IMC/Juniper

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to survive just on Juniper. We have the advantage of relationships that IMC already has. We're able to tap into the huge reach that IMC has through its marketing and bringing buyers and sellers together for decades. It's a tremendous advantage."

He added that something "we felt was really important was that we didn't want to add cost to the ecosystem. For the software that we have, it's going to be subscription based. It's largely going to be pay as you go. We didn't want to have large upfront costs. We wanted something that gives you value right away. And, for most of these costs, we're not adding new costs to the system, we're replacing costs. These are costs people already have. They have to pay for a website, they have to pay to manage their data, they have to pay to manage their customers. We're hopefully giving them an integrated system, which may cost a little less, but will remove a lot of the friction."

As for the marketplace, Juniper isn't looking at the kind of customer acquisition costs competing systems face.

"We have the ability to be more flexible there," Dean said. "We've talked about a low single digit transaction cost. We don't have to charge double digits because our business model doesn't require it. We also don't have to hold people in the marketplace. We're completely channel agnostic. Whether someone orders at the market or they order online or they order through their sales rep. We want to have a way to add value to all three of those channels."

Dorothy Belshaw, IMC evp/chief marketing and digital officer, pointed out that IMC works with the industry all year long, partnering with tenants, retailers and the media. IMC_di and Juniper are an expansion of existing efforts at market and online, including from the individual websites affiliated with the markets where IMC operates, that will continue but now provide Juniper access. At and between markets, Juniper will provide a growing variety of options related to making connections and supporting buyers and sellers large and small. Juniper Marketplace, for example, will have onsite physical market activations as well as associated digital events. IMC already is considering what kinds of programs and features normally presented at market can move online during or even before the events to make them more productive for retailers and vendors participating.

"The goal really is for this to be presented quite seamlessly," Belshaw said. "Our markets will continue to be marketed and branded as they have been. The Juniper opportunity will be an extension of business that transpires at market. Then Juniper online in between markets will essentially be the whole IMC universe." **HWB**

Andis noted that home haircutting kits are currently strong sellers.



Men's Grooming

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online tutorials and other resources on our educational hub."

Online retailers have benefitted the most from sales, although as conventional retail stores begin to reopen, products are moving off those shelves as well.

"It seems winners and losers were predetermined by who was allowed to stay open as 'essential' and who was not," Yde noted. "Online was the most obvious big winner. However, stores have had record growth as well. The focus right now is supplying the surge in demand and the need to keep inventory flowing."

Thomas Nichols, president of Pretika, said, "E-commerce and direct-to-consumer are the channel drivers. Fourth quarter will be a true test for retail promotions to drive channel sales."

Pretika, known for its women's grooming products, offers the Sonic Dermabrasion Preshave Power Cleanser, which lifts the beard up and away from the face for a closer cut, helping users avoid razor burn, razor bumps and irritation.

With the increasing demand for men's grooming products, suppliers are reporting some supply chain pressures, particularly in components such as blades. "Demand is so high, at this point, we are trying to get as much as we can shipped as fast as we can," said Schaefer of Spectrum. "We don't envision the demand slowing down anytime soon, and as a result, capacity is strained across the board."

Cohen agreed that demand currently outstrips supply. "We're being very honest with our retail customers and working with them to manage inventory. Blades are the biggest issue right now; there just aren't enough available."

Bock of Andis said, "With COVID-19 temporarily shutting down our manufacturing facility in Wisconsin, maintaining inventory has been a challenge during this period of strong demand. Ever since we went back to work, we have been following strict safety guidelines for our associates' health, which, while necessary, has slowed down production times."

Wahl's Yde noted, "The story is really one of scarcity. Even today, stores have empty shelves of products as consumers that never before thought about cutting their hair at home, went out and searched for a clipper. Despite being an American manufacturer, some of the parts that go into our products no longer can be sourced locally. This is a major focus we are trying to implement for the future." **HWB**

Garment Care

continued from page 58

years, but now that people haven't put on pants or button-down shirts for the past five months, the industry has seen some steep declines."

Jonathan Schaefer, divisional vp/marketing home and personal care, Spectrum Brands, pointed out that people working from home are taking a much more relaxed approach to apparel.

Schaefer noted, "While there has been a decline in people ironing and steaming, we are still seeing interest in our Black + Decker line. Consumers recognize that Black + Decker products represent a good value. We do expect that sales will rebound."

Felicia Montecalvo, brand manager, Reliable, added, "For the garment care business, we have experienced a decline in our range of professional products. As countless storefronts were mandated to close, there was little to no need to prepare your garments for window displays and floor racks. As we have essentially halted all travel, unfortunately our line of portable garment steamers has taken a hit."

Sales of premium products have been more resilient. "In the at-home garment care category, we have launched our line of Velocity Irons," noted Montecalvo.

"Despite more companies adopting the work-from-home model, there is still a need for people to present themselves in a professional manner, as video conferencing has become integral," Montecalvo added.

Briganti pointed out, "We've seen a shift in usage and behaviors. People who are deeply committed to the category are looking for best-in-class products, so sales trends in our premium products are better. We also have refreshed our product line, and have a number of new products that have been very well received, including our IXEO all-in-one garment care solution."

Rowenta also launched a new folding travel steamer. "The versatility of this unit is great, because steam can be used as a sanitizer, so when people do start to travel again, they can take this with them and steam their sheets in the hotel room," Briganti said.

Consumer interest in crafting and home sewing also promises to give the category a boost. "A pleasant surprise has been growth in the home segment; with everyone pitching in making masks and gowns we have seen a rise for home garment care products," Montecalvo said.

Briganti pointed out, "These are challenging times, but the important thing is how we pivot coming out of it. At some point, people really will want to dress up and go out again, and that will mean more interest in garment care. We need to communicate with consumers about the benefits of our products. It is just a slight shift in perspective, but we think this will help sales rebound in the long run." **HWB**



Rowenta has launched a folding travel steamer to give users versatility.

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Points Of Purchase

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Kay also said being open about CSR programs and values, given greater interests from certain retailers as well as consumers, has been an important aspect of doing business for some time.

Another housewares vendor noted that retailers are requesting information about its CSR practices, especially about sustainability, diversity in the work environment and an overall explanation of the company's vision.

"We are rightly getting more and more requests to confirm our suitability to supply retailers, who in turn have set their own CSR standards," said Nick Cornwell, managing director, Black + Blum, a manufacturer of hydration and food storage. "Interestingly, as a new retail channel is emerging all over the world that puts ecological and sustainability concerns at the center of their offer, we are getting challenged more and more as retail buyers ensure that our merchandise is fit to put in their assortments."

In addition, Cornwell said, consumers have questioned the company about its supply chain, manufacturing processes and product and packaging materials.

"Consumers are now so well informed and aware of these issues that engaging with them openly will often turn them into real advocates for your brand. We use our social media and other communication routes to communicate in this way," he said.

Still, some vendors have reported they have not witnessed an increase in pressure for vendors to showcase their CSR efforts.

This, said Marc Wade, director of business development, Messermeister, is in part due to the reality that factors of quality, price and brand awareness still rule the consumer buying decision.

"In modern times, we have a very small window to communicate to the consumer about a brand/product so the focus naturally stays on the product selling points," he said. "Other segments of the retail industry, like outdoor sports, have a much greater awareness, which gives rise to socially conscience brands. In this segment, social issues are much more central to the consumer."

Everton noted that price is still the key factor when it comes to consumers

making final purchasing decisions, even with younger consumers.

"The most important factor is price, followed by convenience and quality," she said. "This is especially true for Millennials who are generally financially conservative and very price conscious, especially as they become parents with the added expense of raising children."

As noted, convenience and value are at the top of the list, too. However, increasingly, consumers are thinking about social factors when weighing purchase decisions, and, bound by the pandemic, they can't help but consider health, sustainability and other issues with social implications often under an extended definition of wellness.

Overall, said Everton, it is important for brands to keep in mind that transparency is a two-way form of communication and not one sided.

"What 'showing up' also means is to actively be listening to your customers in the marketplace, take action and tell them what you've done," she said.

Vendors warn, however, action must be grounded in authenticity so it doesn't look like a brand is simply jumping on the bandwagon because they observe what others are doing.

"We have learned that real transparency is important—for example, it is no use claiming to be 100% environmentally correct, as most of us are not," said Cornwell. "Being open and honest about the realities of the situation is what people want to hear. From a product design perspective, for example, any business that does not take heed of this is going to suffer if they do not deliver what the consumer is demanding." **HWB**



"Transparency was a pre-existing trend and has certainly been highlighted by the pandemic."

—Marsha Everton,
The AIMSGroup

A Shift In Health, Wellness At The Grocery Level

NEW YORK— The coronavirus pandemic has thrown a brighter spotlight on wellness and issues surrounding health that may wind up becoming an advantage for supermarkets because they've been ahead of the curve addressing social issues such as wellbeing in stores.

Sustainability, fair trade, diversity, wellness are, one way or another, addressed on supermarket shelves as food retailers use their large assortments to directly provide for the needs of a wide array of shoppers on a weekly basis. They are positioned to meet trends that are emerging regarding social issues and particularly those regarding wellbeing, and are generally ahead of other retailers in establishing merchandising and formats that can attract consumers who have been thinking about health during the pandemic.

Raley's, a privately-held chain of 126 supermarkets in the West, has just introduced a new concept store, O-N-E Market in Truckee, CA, one that takes health, wellness and related concerns as its defining characteristic and not just something to tag onto a conventional format, Chelsea Minor, corporate director of consumer and public affairs, told **HOMEWORLD BUSINESS®**.

Consumers don't choose between conventional and wellness-oriented products. Rather, they choose from a curated selection of organic and other products offered based on wellness considerations. O-N-E Market emphasizes transparency as to the qualities of each product, provides in-store wellness education and maintains a list of banned ingredients, such as parabens.

Effectively, O-N-E Market encourages shoppers to rethink the products they purchase and provides insights into their choices it can make in its other stores. What's true in food and consumables is true in general merchandise, where an emphasis is placed on products that reflect the needs of consumers in the Truckee market for outdoor gear such as coolers and hydration products. —Mike Duff

September 2020

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