

SINCE 1984



VERMONT SPECIALTY FOOD ASSOCIATION



TRADESHOW READINESS HANDBOOK



ARE
YOU
READY
FOR
THIS?



TRADESHOW READINESS HANDBOOK

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IS A TRADESHOW IN YOUR FUTURE?

As a new company, you've worked hard to get your product manufactured by an FDA approved plant, you've invested in packaging, UPCs, nutritional analysis, shelf life testing, and have sold it locally at some consumer shows and maybe even to a few retailers.

Wait, this isn't you?

Well, maybe you need to back off on that first trade show. Let me explain why.

Your first step should be "proof of concept". That means you've taken your homemade product and sold it locally at a farmer's market or some other consumer direct venue. When selling to consumers, most states have a "cottage law" that allows you to make the product in your home kitchen. Please check what your local ordinances require and follow the law. We don't want anyone to get sick or for you to get fined. The cottage laws restrict you from selling to retail stores. That will require a commercial kitchen, so you'll need to make that transition before exhibiting at a trade show: national or distributor. If you put this horse before the cart, you won't be able to ship orders right after the show, hence missing out on the financial benefits of having a successful show.

When you sample (called demos) your product at a local venue, you'll get valuable feedback on price, packaging, quality and numerous other considerations. By using this market intelligence, you can determine the best configuration for bringing your product to market. Once you have some repeat customers, you have "proof" that your product has appeal and that people are willing to pay for it, plus some idea of how much they are willing to pay and how often they repeat. The repeated sales are called "turnover," or turns, and are really the key to whether or not you have a successful product. The more your product "turns" the more reorders you get. If consumers only buy it once, you won't ever get enough volume to make this a sustainable business.

Almost no one will tell you it doesn't taste good (they are too kind for that), but they will tell you the package is too big, too small, too expensive, etc. Put your ego aside and ask the hard questions (those are the ones you're afraid to hear the answers to) so that as you go to the next level you can formulate a successful product (in sales and profitability). The next step is to get your product made for you, or for you to build or use a commercial facility to make the product. You must do this to sell your product legally to wholesalers who will then resell it in their stores.

So when are you ready for your first trade show? Well it depends on your business plan. If you are hand to mouth and cash flow is tight, I'd suggest you spend the money building a local business first. You can build brand and get repeat business in your community where you can do inexpensive guerrilla marketing at:

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- flea markets
- catering
- specialty stores
- consumer events, e.g. pop-up events, collaborations, craft shows, etc.

Guerrilla marketing is those functions that build awareness (and sales) of your product, but don't cost much. Your immediate community is likely going to be more enthralled with your "local" product than someone hundreds of miles away.

Guerrilla marketing ideas include:

- Local food and wine tastings and events
- Demos/sampling at retail stores
- Giving a cooking class at a store, the farmers market, etc.
- Networking at business functions
- Having a sign on your car
- Press releases every time you do an event
- Building a social media community

What you want is to get enough movement that these activities fund a trade show. You'll also gain valuable experience with customer feedback, packing and shipping, invoicing and collections. You can afford to make a few mistakes on a small scale and iron out the kinks before you hit the big time. Many significant retailers have programs for local producers so you'll still be able to get significant sales by being a regional player.

You are definitely NOT ready if:

- You don't know how you are going to make the product you might sell at the show.
- You plan to pay for the show with a credit card (this is expensive money and the show is a net expense not a net revenue producer).
- You haven't worked out your COGS (cost of goods sold) and appropriate pricing so that you are making at least 60% gross margin.
- You don't have a wholesale and distributor price list established.
- You don't know how to qualify a lead.
- You don't understand the difference between a broker and a distributor.
- You just want to "see people's reaction".
- You are not ready to write orders at the show and ship them immediately afterward.

Why? Because the experienced buyers you'll be meeting will see straight away that you are not ready for prime time and will keep on truckin'. Sure you'll get that ego gratification from the people who stop

and rave about how great the product tastes, but they are not necessarily buyers! A large portion of attendees are there for entertainment. They live locally and maybe work in the industry, but have no buying authority, or they are someone's friend/family, etc. Also there are a lot of vendors selling labels, jars, marketing, etc. Please be pragmatic and save your resources until you are REALLY ready for prime time.

For those who are considering a new channel, the criteria are similar. Be sure you have maximized your existing chain of distribution. Have you done everything you can to boost sales in your primary channel? If your reorders are weak, you need to reevaluate your product, pricing, promotions and pull through before running off in a new direction. Perhaps your strategy is off, or your price point is too high? Maybe your label doesn't portray your product benefits. It's hard to be critical of your current situation, but no amount of trade show spending is going to correct these kinds of missteps. You'll just end up with a lot of debt and the same lack of revenue.

Questions to ask before spending on another tradeshow:

- What do I want to get out of this?
- Do I really understand who buys my product and why?
- Am I clear which channel I want to penetrate?
- What did I get out of the last trade show I did?
- Did I follow up as much as I could have?
- What was my ROI?
- Am I getting reorders from my current customers?
- Am I staying in touch with them to maximize our relationship?
- Do I have distributor pricing?
- If not, is it worthwhile for me to go to this show if I can only sell directly to retailers?
- Is freight an issue?

Good reasons to exhibit at a trade show, either as a repeat performance or for the first time:

- You understand your product positioning and the trade show niche and the two align.
- You have customers in this niche and it's more efficient to see them all at once at this show.
- You have pricing that has proven effective for this niche.
- You have distributor pricing to support the established retail price point.
- You want to introduce new products, new promotions, a new sales manager, or new packaging.
- You want to attract and interview brokers.

Really think about your objectives in promoting at a show. Exhibiting at a trade show is just one component of a synergistic marketing plan. You may be able to accomplish what you want by going, but not exhibiting. Simply set up appointments with your key players. Or communicate via e-mail blasts, social media and snail mail. Direct mail is still very effective in getting your new product noticed especially when combined with trade press releases, e-mail blasts and social media. By offering to send samples,

you have a measurable call-to-action. You'll get the really serious players taking the time to order the samples offered. Sending samples to even 100 prospects who requested them makes your next step a warm followup call and much less expensive than paying for a whole trade show expenditure.

TYPES OF SHOWS

What is an exhibition, an expo, a trade show, and a trade fair?

They all sound the same to me. Well, yes, nowadays, these terms are very loosely used, and generally mean the same thing – an event where people gather to network, learn about new products or services, and potentially direct sales. Historically, these terms had their meaning, and while they may not seem to be used in their appropriate way in this modern world, it is worth understanding how it all came about. Understanding the precedence behind these terms will give you a better holistic insight into why these terms came about and how they all started. We will run through each of the terms below, define their differences, and give examples of categories that certain events fall into.

What Is A “Trade Show”

These are events that focus on one niche industry at a time and are catered towards larger companies – which typically means a custom-built exhibition booth is an exhibitor's default choice. It suits established companies who are specifically looking to network and partner with other industry players. It's not about the number of attendees; it's more about the quality of attendees and exhibitors. This is an event where early corporate partnerships can be formed and refined accordingly to go to market officially.

Strict B2B

Eligibility for these events is strictly trade-only (only members of the niche industry are allowed to attend), which means exhibitors will receive an extremely targeted handful of visitors that already understand the industry and are decision-makers who are looking to find out about what is new and upcoming that has yet to be officially launched. In addition, because of these niche events, they tend to have only limited media coverage until more information is provided about the products/services that will be released to the market.

Networking & Partnerships

Trade shows are prime events for leaders and key players in the industry to assemble in one of the top exhibition venues to network and potentially create partnerships to form a larger entity to dominate a particular sector. These corporate events also typically encourage an international presence so that all those that attend trade shows can speak with other like-minded companies from different parts of the world and see how they are performing and what improvements could be made.

Present Products Not Yet Launched For Public

Typically, there are no product sales conducted at trade shows; the priority is for presenting new upcoming products that are very close to finalization or already final and are just wanting to share this with the industry to gauge the market and see how much demand there could be, if there is potential to expand it further with partnerships or if adjustments are required to tweak it to perfection and make it an essential part of another business revenue generator. To ensure your business is represented as effectively as possible, engage with a booth designer, so you are on your best foot forwards.

What Is An “Exhibition”

Exhibitions are also classified as B2B. It is where trade professionals and resellers congregate to present new products and services; this type of event suits both established and up-and-coming companies who prioritize a strong brand image presence. It is also a type of event where new products or services are presented, and demonstrations are available for clients to test firsthand to see if they can be relevant to their business. Again, no sales are conducted, and it’s mostly creating awareness for those who attend to recognize what each company is currently doing to take their brand to the next level.

B2B (Trade Professionals & Resellers)

Exhibitions are primarily for trade professionals and resellers within the same industry but not for consumers or the general public. This ensures that the exhibitors contact the right people in the trade industry for repetitive revenue rather than one-off sales. With a B2B crowd it sets the tone for conversations, too – allowing companies to talk technical details and get to the bottom of the core advantages of a particular product/service.

Present New Products/Services & Build Brand Image

For companies who attend these events, emphasis is directed towards building a strong brand image because even though the main goal of an exhibition is to present new products/services – companies there want a strong brand presence, so they are the ones who people remember and getting a custom product display produced will help highlight key products you want your clients to see. In a way, it is for large companies to show their dominance in the industry and for small companies to get noticed. Products/services that have yet to be officially launched are presented to a targeted audience to gauge their interest. Only a limited media presence is allowed to keep the event contents relatively exclusive.

What Is An “Expo”

An expo is where both trade and consumers meet; the clear distinction with expos is that these types of events aim to attract maximum attention – it will have the highest attendance numbers as they welcome people from all sectors to attend without any limitations. It becomes a platform that gets as many people in as possible within the short period that the event is active. The media is welcomed to create hype and share the key details about companies going above and beyond with their booths and offerings.

B2B/B2C (Consumers-Retailers-Trade)

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An expo is typically open to both trade and consumers to attend without any limitations; for exhibitors, the visitors who visit their booth will vary a lot – some may have heard about them before while others would have no idea. Therefore, expos can be a challenge to decide on what and how you exhibit would give you the most optimal outcome because you'll have to be prepared for very basic and unusually detailed questions. How would you design your booth appropriately without risking the chance of not getting noticed at all? It is trial and error, but you can at least get off to a good start by speaking to experienced stand builders.

Maximum Attention And Opportunities Within A Short Timeframe

With the influx of attendees, getting lost in the crowd of exhibitors can quickly become easy. This makes it extremely important to have a booth design that targets a particular group of visitors that you are looking for. Are you looking to generate sales on the spot? Then you'd want to make sure you have plenty of stock on hand and attractively present your products. If you are looking to create meaningful connections with visitors or other exhibitors, perhaps you should include a zone where you can comfortably have a conversation.

What Is A “Trade Fair”

Trade fairs cater primarily to consumers, and at these events, anyone is welcome to attend. There tend to be smaller booths rather than larger ones, and it can be familiar with a marketplace where it is primarily product-based to get as many sales as possible. Visitors who go to these events can either purchase directly from the seller if there is stock available or give their details to show their interest (lead generation). The media is also widely welcomed and encouraged to promote the event to get as many visitors as possible.

B2C (Business-To-Customer)

These events generally cater to the public without any limitation on who can attend. Most booths are packed with products to sell all of them by the end of the event. You can also expect to see many start-up businesses trying to get their foot into the industry. Therefore, you may see many booths selling similar products or products you have not seen before.

Sales & Lead Generation

There are two main types of goals that exhibitors have at trade fairs: to maximize sales and lead generation. Sales are more geared towards businesses with products to sell, and lead generation is for businesses with a service that cannot be provided at the event. The end users tend to be the general public, and trade fairs have no limitations on who can attend; therefore, you would expect maximum foot traffic within a period of only a few days. This makes it a great platform for small businesses to test how much traction they can get and gather feedback to see what people think so they can make informed decisions about their next move.

Conclusion

Nowadays, the difference between exhibition, expo, trade show, or trade fair is not so significant; all these terms tend to be mixed freely without the requirement of classifying the distinctions between each one—therefore, priorities should not be based on understanding the different terms used in the industry. Still, it should focus on your goals and find out which shows would benefit your business more. It could be B2B, B2C, or even a mixed – audience matters, and different events have different limitations on who can attend. Do your research about each event.

How to evaluate a show? Think about...

Who is attending

Get the demographics from the show promoter. Often they will even give you a list of who attended in the past. Remember, they make money selling you the booth, so have a jaded view when you review this list. Rather than focus on the one big fish on the list, consider the rest of the list. Does it represent your target audience?

Who is exhibiting

A list of exhibitors should be available to you. You can see if big players are there, if your competition is there and, maybe more telling, who isn't exhibiting. I highly suggest calling a few non-competitive exhibitors and ask if they have done the show before and what to expect.

Is this an order writing show?

My premise is that ANY show is an order writing show if you approach it that way. However, by asking you'll get the scoop on whether it is promoted as an order writing show. The distributor shows are, and so they tend to be a good investment.

Cost

Is this show within my budget and what will my ROI be in one year? Creating a ROI goal up front, will help you define your deliverables for this show.

Distance

If you're a regional product, will it serve you to be in this show? And if you're not a regional product in this region, will it hurt you? For example, trying to sell fruit products, like preserves, in the Pacific Northwest is a waste of time if you are not made in Oregon or Washington.

Travel

How much is your travel going to add to the cost of this trip? Some places are just more expensive to get to and hotel rooms cost more. Be sure to add this to your budget.

Personnel

Are you going to be taking a good portion of your staff away from everyday duties to prep for, attend, clean-up and follow-up on this show? Can you justify it?

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Know your target market and where they shop; that's the trade show you should do.

If you are packaged in a consumer size, restaurant shows will not be successful for you. If you don't have the right distribution channel, you won't be successful at Expo East or West.

It's always a great experience to attend the show once before committing to a booth to get a feel for the foot traffic, check out the competition, observe various marketing concepts and attend classes to expand your industry knowledge. **Here are the major food shows and the criteria I suggest in evaluating them:**

Winter and Summer Fancy Food Shows

These are the preeminent trade shows for reaching the specialty food trade. These shows are loaded with international pavilions, cheese importer/distributors, major players as well as the most innovative, hot, new product concepts being launched. The members (exhibitors) of the Specialty Food Association average less than \$2 million in annual revenue. There are a lot of players in niche businesses. (You can get a State of the Industry report from The Specialty Food Association.) So why attend? Good question! I highly recommend regional shows, niche shows, and distributor shows if your marketing dollars are limited (and what small company's cash flow isn't?)

The criteria to get into the Fancy Food Shows aren't stringent but that bar is so low that many new exhibitors leave the show with many more questions than answers. It would be more prudent to have 30-50 retail accounts (some national), so you understand the effect of freight on your pricing and reorder models, and have experience with a distributor and/or broker or two. That would be better preparation for such a big expenditure and high expectations.

When it does make sense to do the Fancy Food Show:

- Your product is viable locally and regionally as defined earlier in this guide.
- You have distributor pricing in place, which should be 25% less than your published wholesale price.
- You can say yes to quarterly promotions.
- You can produce enough product to supply a significant customer, for example, you can make a pallet load in less than 4 weeks.
- You understand your COGS well enough to negotiate while standing in front of a meaningful prospect. You might be asked to lower your price, pay for shipping, support your product with an ad, etc. You'll want to understand the impact this will have on your bottom line. If you only want to sell to one-off stores that don't require these investments, please stay local and support those stores so they can sell more product for you.

National Restaurant Association Show

If your product is meant as an ingredient in a commercial kitchen, you may consider this one, the Big Daddy of all restaurant shows. If your product is packaged in a consumer size, don't bother.

This show is huge and you can easily be lost amongst the equipment manufacturers and software exhibits. This show is more about running a successful restaurant than it is about the food.

What chefs are looking for:

- Convenience: make their lives easier
- Consistency: make the product taste the same each and every time, no matter who in the kitchen is applying it
- Cost per serving: add value to the dish but keep the cost reasonable; food costs are tripled to get to the menu price. If it's on the menu for \$15, the ingredients must cost less than \$5.
- Ingredients: there maybe unusual or interesting food trends chefs wants to incorporate but their current supply chain can't find it for them.
- Trends: be cutting edge and you'll be invited to send more information, pricing, etc to the appropriate personnel.
- Products their existing distributors will carry for them: most restaurants want just-in- time suppliers. They need mayo NOW, because they just ran out. They know Sysco will deliver in the morning before lunch. Be prepared to do business this way.

What chefs are not looking for:

- Esoteric products that the consumer doesn't "get".
The menu can only do so much explaining.
- Products they need to order from you directly. This is too much work.
- Expensive additions: most restaurants use a pretty cheap Balsamic vinegar. They can't justify the really good stuff due to pricing restrictions.

Alternative Food Service Shows

Many food service distributors have their own shows where you can showcase your products once you are a vendor. These are the best for educating staff and building the distributor's revenue with you. See "Tabletops" for more info.

Expo East and Expo West

These are the venues for all things natural and organic. There are sections for raw ingredients, gluten free, specialty foods, major distributors, supplements, and health and beauty aids. Expo West is the bigger of the two. Book your hotel early (3-5 months in advance) if you are remotely considering going as they sell out quickly. You can always cancel a hotel room closer to the date if you decide not to go.

The one caveat I always advise is to have a major distributor in place before doing this show. The natural foods industry is different from the specialty food trade where 40% of stores will buy direct from a vendor. In the natural arena, the store owners are incentivized to buy everything from one distributor by a discount structure that rewards them for their purchasing volume. The first question they will ask is "what distributor are you with?" They will walk away if you are not with their preferred vendor. In reality there is only one choice nationally and that is UNFI. So I tell people don't spend the money doing

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this show unless you are already in UNFI and can ship immediately. When this is the case, you can write orders on the spot and e-mail them to UNFI, and they will deliver your product. This eliminates all the follow up and headaches, and you'll know if you are having a successful show by adding up the order totals. A show special is expected and will be for immediate shipment.

Various gift shows

Every major city hosts a gift show twice a year (July/August and January/February), but the best for food are New York, Atlanta and Dallas. If you prefer to sell direct, without a distributor involved, these are good places to be. Since they are regional, you'll need to do more than one, although these 3 have the broadest draw. There are Californians who go to Atlanta because it gets a larger choice of exhibitors than LA or San Francisco. In NY, you will be mixed in with other product categories, but in Atlanta and Dallas they have food exclusive exhibit areas. These are order writing shows and freight is not commonly a concern unless your product is heavy. Have a free freight show special or an opening order deal that includes bestsellers. This will make it easy for the buyers to say yes and hand over their credit card. Often you'll be asked to ship this later, but within the next 3-4 months. Since a lot of giftware is made overseas, these buyers are trained to buy early for their upcoming season whether it's Christmas, Valentine's Day or the summer tourist months.

IDDBA Conference

If your product belongs in deli, dairy or bakery, this is where you'll want to be. The exhibitors range from small manufacturers to the Wisconsin Cheese Board to major distributors. Buyers include key account people from chain supermarkets like Publix and Super Target. This is the big league where trends need to be firmly entrenched. These buyers don't take a lot of chances with unproven products. They are working for large corporations that cater to the masses, not niche players who can hand sell a unique product to a more adventuresome audience. Show specials are not as important as being able to wheel and deal with these executive types. Know what you can offer to get into multi-store chains and understand that this can take time. The wheels move slowly unless they have an immediate need. Ask what their timeline is so you don't get frustrated if your follow-up e-mails get ignored.

Coffee Fest and SCAA Symposium

Coffee shops sell some specialty foods, but not BBQ sauce. Only consider these if you have a product that makes sense in coffee shops/cafes. Snack items, candy and grab-n-go products qualify. You'll need to partner with distributors who provide just-in-time delivery to these stores. They buy in small quantities and reorder as needed. This food service model doesn't require promotional allowances, but it does have higher margin requirements. Expect to sell to the distributors at an EDLP (everyday low price). The SCAA tends to be more international with growers from the global coffee regions and equipment makers. The educational classes are outstanding and address fair trade practices, various coffee buying and roasting issues, as well as legislative and geopolitical concerns. The Coffee Fest shows are regional (West Coast, Midwest and East Coast each year), and feature training and contests for baristas, equipment, local distributors and how to start a coffee business.

Specialty shows

Campus bookstores, hardware show (tailgating), Pizza Expo? When defining your target audience and where they shop, you'll want to look for shows that cater to those niches, whether convenience stores, camp sites, grilling, etc.

These will tend to be peripheral, but when joined with local consumer shows and done regionally, they can boost your brand in your geographic area. There may be less competition from other food vendors as well, letting you own the spotlight. Or you might be one of many in the same category: for example BBQ at the tailgating exhibit. Be sure to ask who else will be exhibiting.

Be careful about price point, too. Your product might be "perfect" for convenience stores, but it may be priced out of context for the average shopper who stops there for gas and a soda.

Distributor Shows (Tabletops)

Called "tabletops" because you typically get a six foot table rather than a 10x10 booth like most shows, these are also usually equipped with a laptop computer or an iPad that is preloaded with your product specs and pricing relevant to each individual account.

If you already have distribution set up, the best money you can spend is on distributor tabletop shows. By being set up in the distributor's computer system and warehouse, you already have the logistics of how to move the product into the store solved. You are visible to the distributor's customers who can say yes and write orders on the spot. You'll need to be nimble, as the requests will be all over the place, from free fill, to BOGOs (Buy One, Get One free), to supporting advertising, to demos. Just know your COGS (cost of good sold) and how much you can spend per unit before going in. Understand that the distributor will take care of reorders, and these first time entry fees will be mitigated over time if your product sells well enough during the introduction. Shippers (self-standing floor displays) are a great way to get into stores without the free fill requirement, plus they get you a multi-case display. These usually perform well; consumers respond to off-shelf displays even when there is no discount involved. However, you'll likely need to provide a discount for the privilege of getting prime display space.

Distributors have different prices for different customers based on volume and service levels. You'll write your orders on this system and get a copy to take with you so you can confirm any deals later when you get billed back for them. Consumer Shows: Farmers markets, flea markets, craft shows, Junior League shows, state fairs, rodeos, wellness fairs, etc. are all great ways to build awareness of your product locally and make some cash. You can test your concept, see if the consumer responds to it, and understand the objections you might have to overcome. If your margins are a little tight at the wholesale level, they are usually generous at retail. These venues can also be a gateway to retail

stores where the farmers market crowd can find your product during the week as well as when you are manning your stand on the weekend. “Locally made” is a big trend now, so if you are doing local and regional venues, you’ll be tapping a supportive consumer base. Join your local Slow Food Chapter and become active in it as well. This is great guerrilla marketing. You’ll also meet like-minded people and potential investors. There is a new movement afoot called Slow Money. It takes a village!

DON'T IGNORE THE BOOTH!

During a trade show, the goal of all exhibitors is to grab the attention of the attendees. Just like any other event, the success of a trade show depends on numerous factors. However, out of all these factors, powerful trade show booth designs play an extremely important role. These days, most of the exhibitors are extremely brand conscious and they want to exhibit solutions that reflect the personality of their brands on the show floor. Mentioned below are some of the most important booth design considerations for a rewarding trade show. However, before discussing these points, it is also important to take into account the goals and trade show budget of the exhibitors.

Trade Show Booth Design Goals

Each booth in a trade show serves as a tool supporting the marketing goals of the exhibitor. Therefore, one of the key steps in trade show booth designing is to outline the goals. The most common of these goals include increasing brand awareness, generating leads, attracting visitors, making sales, and promoting products and services.

Budget for Trade Show Booth

On average, booths account for approximately 10-20% of the overall trade show budget excluding the exhibit space. In order to control the costs related to booth design, it is advisable to focus on design elements that are important for achieving the goals. Booth features that are less related to the overall exhibiting objectives can be excluded for cost reduction.

Design Considerations

Search online and attend trade shows for design ideas and make a list of the components to be added. Booths that stand out in trade shows generally make use of bold graphics, captivating product demonstrations, large signs, interactive components, and samples! Some of the common design elements you may consider for your booth include towers, back walls, hanging structures, meeting spaces, counters, storage spaces, product shelves, media kiosks, etc.

The next step for you is to decide on the right kind of exhibit for your brand. This can be done based on the following factors.

- Your exhibit must have enough space for both attendees and staffers.

- While displaying products, make sure your booth space can accommodate them comfortably.
- If your exhibit demands more intimate space, consider private conference rooms.

One of the primary objectives of attending a trade show is to let people know the story of the brand. The storytelling aspect of exhibiting depends a great deal on booth designing. This message can be delivered to the attendees by smartly planned booths equipped with visual media and exhibit graphics.

Follow these tips to communicate the story of your brand

- Think about the organization's most transformative moments
- Provide something that really matters to the audience
- Highlight the unique or most interesting aspects of your product/service
- Be honest and avoid bragging

Finally, it is time to consider graphics, colors, and lighting. These are considered to be the most important physical aspects of trade show booth design.

Graphics

High-impact graphics are extremely effective in capturing the attention of attendees and attracting a high volume of traffic to a trade show booth.

Colors

Make effective use of colors by ensuring that the coloring scheme of the booth is consistent with your brand's overall marketing design. In order to stand out, only use colors that are bright and easily noticeable. Also, the colors chosen by you should reflect the emotions you are looking to create in the visitors.

Lighting

A smartly-lit space can make all the difference by accentuating the booth's design features. Allow your visitors to experience the details of your graphics by creating a well-lit display. Also, making use of light, you can highlight your exhibit's key areas such as promotional materials, product displays, etc.

In setting up your booth, you naturally want to show your complete line, but take care to showcase and sample your best sellers front and center. Knowing which products generate the most revenue (cash is KING), the highest profit margin and the most units sold will help you steer new customers in the right direction. Always insist a new customer take your top sellers, so they will be successful and REORDER.

Set your booth up in your warehouse prior to each show to see what is stained, broken or needs a screw. This will save you hundreds of dollars and tons of stress by not having to do it when you discover the problem on-site at the show. You'll also be able to gauge how much product to take.

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Lighten your load

The less your booth weighs the less drayage you'll pay to move it around the convention hall. First timers are always shocked at the \$900 bill for their pallet of booth accessories and product. Banners are great for creating a cohesive look and they tend to be inexpensive, resilient and you can carry them with you if you don't want to ship anything.

In my experience, most exhibitors end up with 200-500 leads. About half will want to take collateral information with them, so plan on having 300 sales brochures and price lists and about 150 promotional sheets to hand out. If you have a large catalog or lot of collateral material, you may want to use USB thumb drives with your product information burned into it or QR codes that send them to your website or specific landing page.

Consider taking less product to display and using banner and photographic blow-ups to avoid shipping lots of product to the show. Limit your expenses by taking less, especially if your product is packaged in glass. It is very hard to gauge sample quantity as each category is different. If you are serving cheese, meat, or pasta you will get a lot of tasters. Tea, sauce or olive oil each requires less as people only sip. It's partially up to you, also. Serving size has a lot to do with it. You can differentiate yourself by offering 3 oz. of coffee or tea vs. the tiny sip many companies give. You'll make an impression and the recipient will either stay in your booth longer, or at least think about your product longer as they savor it walking down the aisle.

Do not waste precious time selling something you don't have. Sell the products you have and **MAKE MONEY!** Absolutely under no circumstances should you show any product that is not completely ready to sell, as in:

- COGS, cost of goods sold, has been refined.
- The packaging is exactly the way it will arrive.
- You can ship when promised, whether that is immediately or for the upcoming holiday.

I know everyone says, "What's new?" Consider it a rhetorical question like, "What's up?" You don't have to continuously have new products to introduce. If you follow my advice, you'll have a new promotion, or a new recipe, a new rack or some other way to sell more of the products you have and not spend thousands of dollars developing new products, labels and collateral material, only to have mediocre sales and do it again next year.

Gallery

Take a look at the variety of booth approaches shown over the coming pages. There's no one solution that fits every business. Considerations such as costs, design, products, booth size, timing, sampling or not, and more, can all impact your approach to booth design. Look for guidance where you need it as the cost of this help can easily pay for itself in greater booth impact and easier set-up.



Space for when you need it

Think about whether you want or need seating. It would require a booth size greater than a 10 x 10.

TRADESHOW READINESS HANDBOOK



Effective Banners

A banner stand is one of the most effective and versatile fixtures for a tradeshow booth. Brainjuice used 4 banner stands to create an entire backwall. These 4 banners can be used individually or two paired together for smaller shows or in-store demos.

Bee Shepherd paired a coordinating tablecloth with their banner stand and moved the stand out to the aisle for more visibility to passersby.



Homemade can make the grade

Bjorn Qorn used draped material for their backdrop and used velcro to attach handmade elements. This may not work for everyone. But here it played well into their packaging and with the fact that they were new...but ingenious.

TRADESHOW READINESS HANDBOOK



Center of attention

So much to say here as the center of attention is what the booth is all about. Here, these brands made the center of attention something unique such as a handcrafted display unit or a banner that was shaped to be a larger piece of packaging.



Simply effective

This booth was left intentionally clear and free of clutter so that backwall could do all of the heavy lifting. Big, attention grabbing imagery paired with well designed messaging. There was someone standing in the aisle reading this wall at all times. You almost couldn't help but stop.



Simplicity

Justin's Nut Butters created boldness through their simplified display. This treatment stood out amongst the complexity of the surrounding booths.



Repetition

Not everything needs to be outsmarted and over-thought. Here, the boldness of the packaging and its important message were enough to backdrop the booth.



Customized

The most expensive way to go for sure. With the benefit of being a 10x20 booth, Gary Poppins created a sampling mecca. Everyone got a bag of popcorn and the booth was a buzz with activity.



The message is the goal

Nothing fancy yet it spoke volumes. A clean table display, tablecloth and t-shirts nicely supported the simplicity of the backwall.

TRADESHOW READINESS HANDBOOK



Underwhelming

This booth is fairly common and often the approach of, “I want to keep it simple” is to blame. Don’t be fooled into thinking that this level of simplicity will shine. A tradeshow is a busy place and expectations are high. If it looks like you didn’t care enough the assumption will be that you didn’t.



The message is the goal
Another example of when the message can be all you need.



Multiple panels

You can execute this approach through banner stands or with hard panels as seen here. Either way the approach provides easier portability, flexibility and set up.



Customizing

Here the backwall was created to provide display shelving. A nice seamless look. Customizing can reach the far ends of a budget. But if you work with a fabricator and outline your goals, they are great at coming up with ways to achieve them without breaking the back (hopefully). Notice the stanchions (on the floor) that are used to keep this wall upright. What an easy solution!



Almost worked

This backwall picked up on a packaging detail and used raw plywood as the material matching their product display unit. A nice touch. So, what's wrong? Quick, what brand is this? Without a highly telegraphic logo or message your booth can be easily forgettable or worse, not worth stopping at to begin with.



Use what you have

This front display unit was created with pallets and a small custom sign. Of course you have to ask if this approach using found materials and simply your own ingenuity are right for your brand.



The full environment

This booth was fully customized to provide every function. From storage and displays to lighting and signage. The end effect was a fully engrossing experience that delivered on visuals as well as emotions.

Tradeshow Structure Resources

<https://www.moddisplays.com>

Higher end fixtures sold a la carté or by the dimension of the booth you need.

<https://www.displays2go.com>

Mixed quality fixtures sold a la carté. They sell almost everything you could need from display structures and banner stands to shelving units and lighting.

KNOW WHAT YOU ARE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH

So why are you considering spending all this money, time, effort and bother to do a show?

Write orders:

- Show special (more detail on this coming up)
- Holiday early buy: if you have product that lends itself to heavy fourth quarter sales (gift sets, Christmas themed, party ingredients, etc.) you should consider offering at least 10-15% off if the order is placed by July 15 for shipment September 15-October 15. This will help you plan your production, order packaging and ingredients and manage your CASH FLOW.
- Monthly special: having a monthly or bimonthly special is always a great idea and you should offer it at the show in addition to (or instead of) the other specials.
- New product introduction: if you are introducing a new product, line extension or new packaging, including shippers, create a separate order form or sales brochure for that. By giving it its own marketing, you'll improve your launch success.
- New account offer: you may have a special offer for new accounts, this could include signage, point-of-sale material like recipe cards, a sample kit, a DVD and a teleconference with the store team to introduce them to your product line so they can interact with you and ask questions.

Have appointments with specific key accounts and prospects

Reach out to your existing accounts as well as to high profile prospects that you want to see at the show. Offer to meet for breakfast. You can get passes to get them into the show early. Ask them to come near the end of the show, when they are tired and need a respite. I often tell them to stop at 4 p.m, I'll have a chair and open a bottle of wine for them.

Build a database of contacts

Definitely rent the lead machine that scans the badges. It's so easy to download the data for use later. In the follow up section, I'll tell you what to do with these. Make notes on the printout for easier follow up. Your database is your most important marketing tool. These are the individuals who have expressly shown interest in your products. As you qualify them, they go from suspects (if they are at the show, they must be potential buyers), to prospects, where you've qualified them by asking the right questions to determine if they are the decision maker and their store is likely to carry your brand.

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- Double check that their e-mail address and phone number on the scan is correct for marketing purposes
- If they insist on giving you a business card rather than scanning, check the mail and cell number on it
- Ask for an additional contact person in their office, i.e., their assistant's e-mail, explaining that, "I know how busy you'll be after the show, and I want to be sure we get this accomplished as quickly as possible."
- Get consumer e-mail addresses for direct marketing with your e-mail blasts to drive them to your website or to store locations near them.

Launch new products, but only if they are ready to ship

Do not waste time "showing" new products that are in the pipeline. You lose the "big bang" and excitement of a good launch opportunity, someone can knock off your idea, customers decide to "wait" to order so you miss revenue NOW (cash is KING).

Launch new programs

- **Introductory special:** you may choose to combine products that ensure the prospect gets your best sellers at a special price or with additional marketing collateral contributing to their success.
- **New rack program:** by providing a rack, you highlight your product, get it off the shelf where all your competitors are, and it can be featured next to appropriate products that enhance the sale, e.g., salad dressings in the produce department, BBQ sauce next to the chicken, etc.

Launch new promotion

- Holiday early buy (discussed above)
- Pre-order program for seasonal: Easter, Cinco de Mayo, Christmas items, gift sets, special sizes formatted for gift baskets, etc.
- Small run items: wineries allocate their "Special Reserve" wines, why can't you? Especially if you can only get a small crop of those organic pears.....make the preserves and label it "limited edition"

Interview broker

- Know which territories in which you want to increase your sales
- Know the key accounts you want to target
- Interview to satisfy your objectives

Have a broker meeting to educate your existing broker team.

An educated sales force will be more productive

Look for suppliers

You may need a co-packer or packaging. Network at the show. Other exhibitors are often willing to assist you if you do it at a time when they are not swamped.

- Introduce new packaging or display units
- Update your packaging
- Shippers are great for certain channels, especially supermarkets
- Racks may be the answer for brand building where you want a permanent display in an area that doesn't have shelf space or is near a complimentary product category, for example, a rack of crackers in the cheese department.

Look for distributors

- Know which territories in which you want to increase your sales
- Know the key accounts you want to target
- Interview to satisfy your objectives
- Understand the costs of doing business with them
- Consider whether they are best managed by using a broker as a go-between

MARKETING BEFORE THE SHOW

By planning for your next show as early as possible, you will relieve stress and have time to competitively shop for vendors and service contractors. I have seen many companies wait until the last minute to review their collateral needs only to find their preferred printer can't schedule them efficiently and there are up-charges for rush jobs and next day UPS delivery. Each show provides a thorough checklist of what to do logistically. This list is meant to provide marketing direction.

Here is a timeline and what to do:

12 months prior

- Analyze show results from the show you just finished while fresh in your head; A Trade Show Tracking form is attached with this guide.

TRADESHOW READINESS HANDBOOK

- Determine ROI and feasibility of repeating this show or investing in others
- Create budget and timeline for show payments and logistics

6 months prior

- Finalize any new product R&D
- Get packaging concepts done
- Set timeline for packaging and marketing activities
- Contract for photography and printing of collateral material
- Develop your press kit

4 months prior

- Review collateral material for content and update
- Finalize any new product packaging
- Have new photography complete
- Print new sales brochure
- Send out press releases to media that need it this far ahead, most print deadline is 90+ days out; pitch stores that tie you to the community, a trend or human interest.

2 months prior

- Finalize your holiday early buy program
- Review last year's show results again
- Create objectives list for this show
- Set up demos at high profile retailers
- Book ride-along with distributor sales people and brokers
- Schedule distributor and broker sales meetings
- Advertise in the trade magazines pre-show issue

30 days prior

- Send holiday early buy program to brokers and customers
- Finalize show special

20 days prior

- Send postcard via snail mail allowing 10 days via bulk mail
- Start telemarketing campaign to existing database (this may take two weeks or longer depending on the size of your list)
- Social media announcements
- PR to media that is primarily online

10 days prior

- Send e-mail blast announcing show special, booth number and any other pertinent news
- Send blast fax to those you don't have e-mails for

- Print show special order forms for the booth using bright colored paper, including booth number and suggested retail pricing based on the net price
- Social media announcements

During the show

Tweet, post pictures on Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, and comment on LinkedIn

YES, HOW TO BEHAVE AT THE SHOW

I often see booth personnel handing out pricing (egad! could that be my competitor?) without any qualifying questions being asked. I know it gets busy, but let's keep this mindless dispensing of info to a minimum.

Educate your staff on the following:

- What your objectives are!
- **Know the badge identifiers:** at the Fancy Food Shows each strip on the badge identifies the attendee class so you at least know if you have a broker, retailer, distributor, exhibitor or visitor in front of you; at most shows there is a coding system which is explained in your exhibitor manual.
- Have an opening line other than "May I help you?" These help to qualify prospects so you spend time with the ones who are there to buy and not the auntie who got a badge from her nephew who owns a deli in Hoboken. If you'd like, you can capture the consumer leads for use in your e-mail campaigns aimed at direct-to-consumer promotions. Stay away from yes or no questions. Here are some examples:
 - What brings you to the show?
 - What kind of store do you have?
 - How is this category performing in your store?
 - That's a lovely piece of jewelry; tell me about it. Icebreaker.
 - I love Santa Fe. (from reading their badge) Icebreaker.

How to probe and qualify attendees:

You want to know if they are buying direct, ordering at the show or have success with your category,

To determine their objectives, ask:

- Tell me about your store.
- What departments do you have in your store?
- How many people work in your store?
- How can we be successful together in your store(s)?
- What is your best seller in my category? How did they get to be so successful?
- How many stores do you have?
- Do you buy direct or from a distributor?
- Which distributors?
- Are you placing orders at the show?

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- What is your primary purpose in coming to the show?
- When are you expecting to require delivery?
- Which of my products make the most sense for your store?
- When can I follow up with you, or your assistant, or is there someone else who will be in charge of making this happen? Get their name, phone number and e-mail address.
- Take good notes so the person doing the follow up has some idea of what to focus on, what the prospect was interested in and how to GET THE ORDER.

You can use a rating system: hot/immediate, 3-6 months, mailing list only, consumer list only.

- Most brokers are only likely to follow up with customers they already do business with or would like to do business with. If you hand over the leads to brokers, they are not going to drive 100 miles to check this store out, so get the most you can out of this prospect at the show. Including an order!

Handing out product information:

- Only after the prospects agree to have their badge scanned
- Confirm they are the person to follow up with, if not get the appropriate person's phone number and e-mail
- Ask if there is an assistant who will handle the paperwork to get your product set up in the system, capture that name, phone number and e-mail

Visiting with other exhibitors:

- Everyone is friendly at the show and love to try each other's products. Make it clear to your

staff that they are meant to be talking to prospects. Do not interrupt when someone is talking to a customer.

- Ditto for brokers who show up to visit. Put them to work, reschedule for an other time to get info, or take it out of the booth for privacy.
- Minimize late nights, be alert and professional: You doesn't enjoy getting out of the office? And it's great to let your hair down a bit when on the road, but be sure you can function WELL in the morning.

TYPE OF TRADESHOW ATTENDEES

The prospect of attending a trade show seems both exciting and nerve-wracking at the same time. Contacting several interested customers will catapult your sales to new levels. It doesn't matter whether you're running a large or small business; trade shows are guaranteed to be lucrative, provided that you make the right moves.

The trade show game is like chess; every step you take counts. Many exhibitors make the mistake of solely concentrating on the visual aspects of their trade show booth displays and wind up at the show with an ineffective sales plan.

Ignoring the human element of your trade show will only spell disaster. As we're sure you already know, there are various types of trade shows. Similarly, there are a variety of trade show attendees, each with a unique personality.

Given this, it's safe to assume that different attendees all think differently. Each trade show visitor will have a different set of goals and expectations. A "one size fits all" approach to your booth would not work. Remember, you're dealing with many personalities, and appealing to all of them is bound to be an uphill task.

The market is client-centric, and hence consumer profiling and target-audience segmentation have become inevitable more than ever. It would help if you considered each client as an individual instead of a cluster. Hence, having titles to interpret the social, cultural, psychological, and behavioral patterns will be vital.

Your pitch and conversion rate will improve when you have better insights about your clients. Once you have a clear target audience profile, you can prepare your brand narrative to attract customers. Based on your profiling and objective, trade show display ideas will change.

If you're aware of the various types of trade show visitors, you can significantly enhance your chances of success. Here's a look at the different types of attendees you're likely to meet at any given trade show and how you should interact with them:

The Compulsive Shopper

We all are aware of people who shop till they drop. Many individuals consider buying things their fa-

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favorite pastime and are not worried about maxing out their credit cards. While participating in any trade show, you can expect compulsive shoppers to visit your booth at some point.

That being said doesn't expect such personalities to purchase almost anything. Like every other visitor, they will have expectations and might seek something specific.

Make sure that your booth staff is well-trained to handle such potential clients. Impressing these clients could ensure the present and future success of your brand. That's because compulsive shoppers are the cream of the crop. If they are looking for something specific that you don't sell, you can still convince them to buy your offerings.

In order to do this, you first need to entice them with an attractive booth design to tempt them into checking out your offerings.

The Social Butterfly

A social butterfly is an individual who is friendly with almost everyone, moving from person to person like a butterfly flitting from flower to flower. Such visitors typically attend trade shows to check out different offerings. You would most likely find them enthusiastically distributing business cards and chilling at post-show dinner parties and photo shoots.

If you want to make a positive impression, you can do so by handing them your well-designed business cards. Strike up conversations with these individuals and pay close attention to what they're saying. When you get in touch with them for a follow-up conversation, bring up some of the things you discussed earlier. They will be pleased that you remembered speaking with them and will be happy to engage with you further.

The Freeloader

We all have read or heard the famous saying, "Don't judge a book by its cover." That's quite true when it comes to tire kickers. They might be seen as showing a genuine interest in your brand, but actually, they're there just for the promotional giveaways and other freebies. Such personalities often attend trade shows to acquire as many goodies as possible without spending any money from their pockets.

In essence, they're diametrically opposite to compulsive shoppers. Also, such individuals are less likely to commit to a single brand and often like to try out new things. So, the concept of brand loyalty doesn't seem attractive to them. Don't expect much from freeloaders, and try to spot them as quickly as you can. Doing so will help you direct your resources towards genuine, interested clients.

The Surveyor

Another category of trade show visitors who are there just for the experience. Like a surveyor, you can find them exploring every nook and cranny of the trade show floor. They like to follow the gossip grapevine and make sure that they don't miss a single beat.

Surveyors are impressed by new and unique things, so ensure that your trade show booth is enigmatic

and has something special to offer. Such individuals are difficult to impress and it would take directed efforts from your end to truly amaze or wow them. Unlike tire kickers, however, they are impressed by the innovation and are willing to spend on the right product.

The Inquisitor

Also known as interrogators and data collectors, such individuals can be easily spotted at any trade show. We all know that one customer likes asking questions unrelentingly. Such personalities can be seen jotting down information in their notebooks or tablets.

Once they obtain all the brand info, they're likely to disappear quicker than the Flash. Inquisitors are less likely to buy your products and are simply looking to gather as much information as possible. Be polite, but don't expect much from them.

The Spy

All exhibiting brands at trade shows like spying on each other. After all, everyone wants to know what their competitors are doing. An employee from your rival business may walk up to your stall and inquire about your business.

Many would try to gauge your business secrets by asking intelligent questions. Always be on your toes and avoid spilling the beans. Although there is no harm in establishing meaningful connections, don't get over friendly. Try to ascertain their intentions by reading between the lines. Also, train your booth staff on how to spot a spy.

The VIP

One of the best customers, VIPs, are wealthy clients willing to spend a lot of money. The only downside is that it's challenging to spot one as they easily blend in with the crowd. They don't wear any unique ID that helps differentiate them from the rest of the throng. That being said, one of the biggest mistakes that exhibitors can make is undermining their purchasing power.

According to experts, such clients spend only an average of 15 seconds at a booth. So, it's essential that you quickly greet them and manage to hold their attention for an extended time frame. Going out of the way by doing something nice and showing immense respect should do the trick.

The Window Shopper

Ah, we all know individuals who like to check things out. It's pretty easy to spot them as they often have a standard response like "Just looking." Unlike freeloaders, most window shoppers are straightforward about their intentions and will not try to show any fake interest in your offerings.

However, not all of them are just casually strolling through the arena, and a few can be converted into qualified leads. So, make sure you provide every one of them with a positive experience.

The Consultant

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Yes, you can expect many consultants at any trade show. They're generally looking for brands to recommend to their clients. So, you can rope in many customers by impressing just a single consultant. If your offerings match their needs, you can expect bulk orders. Consultants play a significant role in influencing many people's buying decisions, so their influence cannot be overlooked.

Spotting a consultant may not always be easy. Your staff should be able to interact with every individual walking into your booth and leave them with a positive impression of your brand. You never know when a consultant may drop by.

The Judge

No, we don't mean magistrates. A judge is a no-nonsense person who will explore the trade show floor and listen to what exhibitors say. They are good listeners and will allow you to explain why your brand is unique and superior. After gathering all the relevant information, they will weigh the pros and cons and arrive at conclusions.

If your sales staff are akin to good lawyers, you might succeed in expanding your clientele. Also, such clients can be found across different types of trade shows.

Now that you're aware of the different kinds of trade show clients use this information to your advantage and formulate your sales plan accordingly. You must prioritize certain customers over others – for obvious reasons. Make sure that your booth staff is well-trained to handle different personalities.

Remember all the types of trade show attendees mentioned above and consider different strategies to attract them. Be creative while choosing trade show exhibit. If you're looking for creative and unique trade show booth designs for any upcoming trade show, be sure to check our portfolio section. We are client-centric and hence offer plenty alternatives for customization. Once you contact us and choose the booth design our project manager will take care of everything, from design to delivery of the booths. In addition, you can store your trade show booth displays at our warehouse facility where our team will take care of maintenance.

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR TRIP

By arriving early and staying afterwards, you can do even more to maximize your show expenses. You spread the cost of the airfare over another set of accomplishments.

- See some top area retailers: get an appointment on their turf
- Do a demo for a local customer. Many retailers go to NY early to see what the retailers there are doing. How cool if they see your product being sampled when they trek through Balducci's or Citarella's.
- Do a seminar for your distributor or broker staff. This is a great way to educate those who sell for you, familiarize them with you and your products and learn what it takes to be successful with

their customers.

- Have your local distributor or brokers drive you to key accounts. Riding with a couple of reps can be very eye opening on both sides. They learn your story by hearing you give it repeatedly, and you see what their typical day is like.
- Vacation and sightsee. You earned it!

THINK THE SHOW IS DONE? HARDLY!

You mean we're not done? Now that you have 200+ leads on an Excel spreadsheet, what do you do with them? If you didn't close them at the show (I tried to tell you), you'll need to follow up. Maybe for a year or more. So what is the best procedure?

- **Load the leads into a database.** There's ACT! It's been around for 25 years, it's very intuitive to use, and it is inexpensive. You can have it on your hard drive or in the cloud. It doesn't work with Apple computers, but will sync with any type smartphone. Lots of people like Sales Force. I think it's overkill, but if you are a computer wiz, you might love it. There are others available, but these two are the gold standard. Don't use an Excel spreadsheet. You can't keep track of multiple calls or when to call again. Outlook has some functions that work for follow up, like scheduling reminders and keeping notes in one place, but it really is not meant as a CRM (contact relationship manager).
- **Direct mail:** send your sales brochure, pricing and a thank you letter. I know you think they took it with them at the show, but what if they can't find it? This is a relatively inexpensive follow up after all you've spent and been through. Plus, the Specialty Food Association has data from buyers saying very few companies follow up. So be a rock star. Record this in your dB/CRM.
- **Telemarket:** call and ask for their business. It's a lot harder to say no to a real person. You'll build a relationship. Record this in your dB/CRM.
- **Send an e-mail.** Most leads now register with their e-mail address so you will have it on the Excel spreadsheet if you use the lead retrieval machine. Use a program like SwiftPage (fully integrates with ACT!), Mail Chimp or Constant Contact and you'll be able to see who opened them! Record this in your dB/CRM.
- **Pass the leads on to your distributor or broker.** Make copies; keep your originals. Ask for feedback. Record this in your dB/CRM.
- **Track leads over the next 12 months.** When you import them into your database, use a field

for "referred by" and name it "20XX Summer Fancy Food Show". You can then create a lookup for that group and see how many have become customers over time.

- **Quantify the results.** See the attached Excel spreadsheet "Trade Show Evaluation" form included with this guide.

TOP SHOWS FOR 2023

Natural Products Expo West - Anaheim, CA

March 7-11

Natural Products Expo East - Philadelphia, PA

Sept. 20-23

Natural Expo West focuses on exhibiting natural and organic lifestyle products. Attracting a staggering 57,000 attendees in 2022, this is the ideal trade show for CPG brands looking to catch the attention of health-conscious retailers.

If you want to meet as many buyers and distributors as possible, Natural Expo West is the place to be. Beyond networking opportunities, the show is known for showcasing the latest consumer product trends and innovative ideas for brands to bring back home.

If this is your first CPG trade show, just know that Expo West is much larger than Expo East. Expo West is geared toward brands looking to connect with national buyers. On the flip side, Expo East is better suited for first-timers at trade shows. Still, both events are big!

Fancy Food Show - Las Vegas, NV

January 15-17

Fancy Food Show - NYC

June 25-27

The Fancy Food Show features thousands of exhibitors sampling the latest specialty food and beverage products for attendees. Past events have welcomed 2,600+ exhibitors featuring over 200,000 food items.

Spanning more than 40 product categories, the event welcomes food brands of all shapes and sizes. The trade show offers networking events and education opportunities for attendees and exhibitors to learn from industry experts with the show's talks, workshops and tastings.

The latest Winter Fancy Food Show featured expert talks on shipping, the supply chain, CPG branding and so much more.

If you're up for the challenge, enter the event's specialty food pitch competition to prove that you're the next big thing. This is one of the best food and beverage conferences for up-and-coming brands to attend (especially if your endgame is to get featured in specialty grocery stores).

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BevNET Live - Santa Monica, CA 2023 Dates TBD

Living up to its namesake, BevNET caters exclusively to beverage brands.

This event is the go-to place to learn new trends and actionable lessons from experts to take your brand to the next level. The 2022 conference's stacked lineup of speakers included founders and CEOs from big-time beverage brands like Celsius, GHOST and Klaus.

There's no shortage of taste-testing opportunities at a beverage trade show as big as BevNET. Sample bars showcase products in front of potential buyers, making this a trade show for brands to attend as an exhibitor or a guest.

Pro-tip: if you plan to exhibit at this show, make sure your booth is on point and stocked with samples.

FOUNDERMADE Discovery Show - Los Angeles, CA 2023 Dates TBD

FOUNDERMADE focuses on discovery and growth for wellness, food and beauty brands. This CPG event emphasizes innovation and leadership in the direct-to-consumer space.

The show offers a chance to get in front of 2,000+ retailers, distributors, influencers and investors. If you want to keep a strong pulse on DTC trends and network with fellow brands in the wellness space, this is the trade show for you.

National Restaurant Association Show - Chicago, IL May 20-23

The National Restaurant Association Show is the ultimate trade show for professionals in the restaurant and culinary industries. Here you'll learn and see firsthand the latest equipment, supplies, tech and products in the space. The 2023 show is focused on helping brands in foodservice bounce back.

In-person demos from chefs and mixologists are cornerstones of this event. Oh, and don't sleep on the networking opportunities such as the Young Professionals Party and Industry Night Out. For food and CPG brands in the Midwest, this is your chance to mingle with restaurant owners and seek out potential partnerships.

National Candy, Gift & Gourmet Show - Cherry Hill, NJ

Jan. 15-16

National Candy, Gift & Gourmet Show - Atlantic City, NJ

Sept 10-12

The Philly Candy Show is an event dedicated to the specialty confectionery industry. The event serves as an opportunity for retail, wholesale and manufacturing professionals to get a look into new trends and items offered in the space.

All types of candy, equipment and packaging are featured at the show. If your brand delivers sweet treats, don't miss this trade show.

NOSH Live - Santa Monica, CA

2023 Dates TBD

NOSH Live is an annual conference for the natural food industry. Here you'll find hundreds of natural food professionals attending to see experts talk about their past experiences and predict the future of natural products. The event welcomes founders, mid-stage brands and retailers alike.

This trade show is known for fostering conversations about innovation, investment knowledge, branding and marketing in the natural food space. Attend if you're looking to network and get firsthand insights from industry leaders. From pitch competitions to product sampling, there's so much to experience throughout the event.

Groceryshop - Las Vegas, NV

September 18-21

As the leading event for grocery and CPG products, Groceryshop is a can't-miss conference.

With thousands of startups, supermarkets, investors and grocery retailers attending, this trade show is one of the best places to meet buyers. Past guests include executives from Alibaba, Sam's Club, 7-Eleven and Albertson's.

Groceryshop offers attending brands a breakdown of new trends, technology and business strategies to advance their businesses. If you're in the growth stage, this is the perfect place to learn about CPG marketing, technology, merchandising, the supply chain and store operations.

Nourished Festival - Secaucus, NJ June 3-4

Nourished Festival - Grayslake, IL October 14-15

As a gluten-free, allergy and specialty diet event, Nourished Festival celebrates a growing niche within the food and beverage industry.

With 100+ brands providing samples and discounted gluten-free products, this trade show is suited for companies catering to customers with special diets. This event is also a great spot to meet retailers and businesses on the hunt for new allergy-friendly products.

TRADESHOW EVALUATION FORMS

See the following pages

SHOW ATTENDED

Planning and Execution

- 1 How influential was the pre-show marketing?**
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
- 2 How well did the trade show meet marketing objectives?**
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
- 3 How well did the exhibit attract the quality and type of prospects it was intended to?**
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
- 4 Practicality of promotional material?**
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
- 5 How well suited was the booth for the space allotted?**
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
- 6 How adequate was the booth location?**
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
- 7 How engaging was the exhibit to trade show attendees?**
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
- 8 The number of quality leads gathered?**
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
- 9 How sufficient were show services?**
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
- 10 Were the products and/or services displayed the right offerings for this audience?**
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
- 11 How well did the in-booth presentation / promotion resonate with attendees?**
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
- 12 Lead gathering process/software?**
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
- 13 Ratio of booth staff to attendees?**
 Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent

14 How efficient was exhibit set up and dismantle?

- Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent

Trade Show Exhibit Design

15 Effectiveness of exhibit's overall design and appearance?

- Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent

16 How well did the exhibit stand apart from the competition?

- Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent

17 How reflective was the exhibit of the company culture?

- Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent

18 How functional was the booth layout?

- Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent

19 How comfortable was the exhibit space for visitors?

- Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent

20 How prominent was the company brand?

- Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent

21 How well did the exhibit showcase company products and services?

- Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent

22 Quantity of exhibit storage space?

- Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent

23 How well did the booth represent the company's position in the marketplace?

- Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent

24 How conducive was the booth to engaging customers and prospects in conversation?

- Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent

25 How was the booth's size in relation to the closest competitor's?

- Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent

SELL SHEET EXAMPLES

These are the variety of elements you'll find on most sell sheets.

1. Contact information

I'll start with the obvious. Add your name, address, phone number, email (and fax if you have it) to your sell sheet. And don't just include a business card – those get lost. Having your contact information in more than one place assures the buyer they'll be able to find it.

2. Big “money-shot” picture

Think about what draws you in to look at something – it's the visuals. And the same is true with your sell sheet. Have product photography at the ready so you have some variety in what picture you're going to choose. In the examples below, you'll notice how beautiful photography plays a key role in selling.

3. Your product line

How many products do you have? While you don't have to go into detail for each product, list your different varieties – and note your most popular products. If buyers have to limit the number of SKUs they bring in, they want to know what's going to move best. Note buzz-words, too, like gluten-free, dairy-free, etc.

4. UPC's (if you have room)

Why put ugly barcodes on your sell sheet? If your products get accepted, the buyer needs these to add to their inventory system. An alternative is to list the UPC codes in a table – that way you have more room for everything else on this list.

5. Customer testimonials

Customers LOVE your product. Retailers want to see that their customers will, too. Testimonials are powerful tools to show buyers your product is tops in the market. 2-3 is a good number – you don't want to go overboard!

6. List of distributors

How are retailers going to get your product? Sure, you may deliver directly to retailers, but sometimes it's easier for buyers to order everything through one distributor.

7. Ordering details

Do you have order minimums? Do you ship? What about mixing cases? If you answer all these questions on your sell sheet, you'll be closer to getting an order because the buyer won't have to clarify anything with you.

8. What makes you different

This should be higher on the list, but what you're ultimately trying to do is convince the buyer that your jam (or mustard, brownies, etc) are better than other products. Do you have a unique story? Are your ingredients local? What about your flavors – are they like nothing ever seen before?

9. Pricing? (Maybe not)

Pricing may be best kept to a separate price sheet. Between distributor and wholesale prices and any variety of specials you may have at any given time, keeping prices separate lets you create a sell sheet that lasts while your price sheet, a simpler design, gets updated more frequently.

10. Your story

Food is all about the people who make it – what's your story? There's no room for a novel, but you want people to get a sense of your "WHY". Make it come through on your sell sheet.

And it's as simple as that. While some of this is optional, feel free to customize your company's sell sheet to your needs.

So, what's next? Samples of course.



PROTEIN BAKING MIX

DAIRY-FREE • GLUTEN-FREE

YOU CAN HAVE YOUR CRAVING AND EAT IT TOO



100% all-natural ingredients

Old-fashioned wholesome baking with 21st century nutrition

Average muffin packs more than 11g of protein

Made with 100% whole grain

Long lasting shelf life

Certified



GOOD SOURCE OF PROTEIN
WOW





PROTEIN BAKING MIX

DAIRY-FREE • GLUTEN-FREE

Wholesome Cravings' protein baking mixes are a delicious way to make a healthy treat right at home. Our mixes make muffins or bars with a rich texture and provide better taste, greater nutrition and more protein than your average off-the-shelf baking mix.



BANANA CHOCOLATE CHIP

Tastes like rich banana bread with the added benefit of protein.



PUMPKIN SPICE

Enjoy the traditional flavors of pumpkin and cinnamon with a zing of citrus.



APPLE GINGER

Like a Vermont autumn apple cake with the sophisticated taste of ginger.



DECADENT CHOCOLATE CHIP

You'll be blown away by its rich, dark, melt-in-your mouth chocolatey flavor.

Nutrition Facts		
Serving Size 1/7 package (18g) makes 1 bar (78g) prepared as directed		
Servings Per Container 7		
Amount Per Serving	Dry Mix	Prepared as Directed
Calories	70	170
Calories from Fat	20	40
% Daily Value*		
Total Fat 2.5g	4%	7%
Saturated Fat 0.5g	3%	8%
Trans Fat 0g		
Cholesterol 0mg	0%	27%
Sodium 180mg	8%	9%
Total Carbohydrate 5g	2%	8%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%	12%
Sugars 2g		
Protein 7g*	10%	16%
Vitamin A	0%	2%
Vitamin C	0%	8%
Calcium	0%	2%
Iron	2%	4%

*11g of protein when prepared as directed

Nutrition Facts		
Serving Size 1/7 package (19g) makes 1 bar (78g) prepared as directed		
Servings Per Container 7		
Amount Per Serving	Dry Mix	Prepared as Directed
Calories	70	150
Calories from Fat	15	35
% Daily Value*		
Total Fat 1.5g	2%	5%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%	5%
Trans Fat 0g		
Cholesterol 0mg	0%	27%
Sodium 140mg	6%	7%
Total Carbohydrate 6g	2%	6%
Dietary Fiber 2g	8%	12%
Sugars 2g		
Protein 8g*	10%	16%
Vitamin A	0%	70%
Vitamin C	0%	0%
Calcium	2%	4%
Iron	4%	6%

*11g of protein when prepared as directed

Nutrition Facts		
Serving Size 1/7 package (19g) makes 1 bar (78g) prepared as directed		
Servings Per Container 7		
Amount Per Serving	Dry Mix	Prepared as Directed
Calories	70	190
Calories from Fat	15	35
% Daily Value*		
Total Fat 1.5g	2%	6%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%	5%
Trans Fat 0g		
Cholesterol 0mg	0%	27%
Sodium 140mg	6%	8%
Total Carbohydrate 6g	2%	10%
Dietary Fiber 2g	8%	8%
Sugars 2g		
Protein 8g*	10%	16%
Vitamin A	0%	2%
Vitamin C	0%	0%
Calcium	2%	4%
Iron	4%	8%

*10g of protein when prepared as directed

Nutrition Facts		
Serving Size 1/7 package (27g) makes 1 brownie (78g) prepared as directed		
Servings Per Container 7		
Amount Per Serving	Dry Mix	Prepared as Directed
Calories	100	300
Calories from Fat	25	100
% Daily Value*		
Total Fat 2.5g	4%	17%
Saturated Fat 0.5g	3%	23%
Trans Fat 0g		
Cholesterol 0mg	0%	23%
Sodium 95mg	4%	7%
Total Carbohydrate 12g	4%	13%
Dietary Fiber 2g	8%	12%
Sugars 2g		
Protein 9g*	12%	16%
Vitamin A	0%	40%
Vitamin C	0%	0%
Calcium	0%	0%
Iron	10%	15%

*11g of protein when prepared as directed

PROD. CODE: 101



PROD. CODE: 102



PROD. CODE: 103



PROD. CODE: 104



YOU CAN HAVE
YOUR CRAVING AND
EAT IT TOO

WHOLESOME CRAVINGS

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802.425.6430

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monica@wholesomecravings.com
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- Non GMO
- No Added Oil
- No Added Sugars
- Low Sodium
- No Gluten Containing Ingredients*



- NUTRIENT RICH
- CALORIE LIGHT
- VEGAN
- REMARKABLE TASTE

pasta, veggie & zoodle sauce

- Spicy Red Lentil Arrabiata
- Clean & Classic Marinara
- Tuscan Sweet Potato
- Butternut Chipotle





live young is our mantra. Savor your health and be young, inside and out, by fueling each day with wholesome food you can trust. Enjoy the flavor and variety you desire without sacrificing your health.

Enjoy!



spicy
red lentil
arrabiata

Nutrition Facts	
4.6 servings per container	
Serving size 1/2 cup (125g)	
Amount per serving	
Calories	60
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 150mg	6%
Total Carbohydrate 6g	2%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Total Sugars 4g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	0%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 28mg	2%
Iron 1mg	6%
Potassium 121mg	2%

* The % Daily Values (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

INGREDIENTS: Organic Fire Roasted Tomatoes, No Salt Added Vegetable Broth (Vegetable Stock (Carrot, Mushroom, Tomato, Onion, Celery, Red Bell Pepper), Natural Flavor, Spice and Herbs (Bay Leaf, Thyme, Black Pepper), Onions, Green Peppers, Red Lentils, Carrots, Tomato Paste, Italian Seasoning, Black Pepper, Red Pepper Flakes, Citric Acid



clean &
classic
marinara

Nutrition Facts	
4.6 servings per container	
Serving size 1/2 cup (125g)	
Amount per serving	
Calories	40
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 65mg	3%
Total Carbohydrate 8g	3%
Dietary Fiber 2g	5%
Total Sugars 4g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	0%
Protein 1g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 20mg	0%
Iron 0.4mg	2%
Potassium 51mg	0%

* The % Daily Values (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

INGREDIENTS: Tomato Sauce (Tomato Puree (Water, Tomato Paste), Water, Less than 2% of: Citric Acid, Onion Powder, Garlic Powder, Red Pepper), Onions, Organic Diced Tomatoes, Water, Red Wine Vinegar, Organic Garlic, Organic Lemon Juice, Basil, Oregano, Parsley and Garlic Powder.



tuscan
sweet
potato

Nutrition Facts	
4.6 servings per container	
Serving size 1/2 cup (125g)	
Amount per serving	
Calories	110
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 3.5g	5%
Saturated Fat 0.5g	3%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 25mg	1%
Total Carbohydrate 18g	6%
Dietary Fiber 3g	10%
Total Sugars 5g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	0%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 41mg	4%
Iron 1mg	6%
Potassium 368mg	8%

* The % Daily Values (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

INGREDIENTS: Sweet Potatoes, Water, Cashews, Shallots, Garlic, Balsamic Vinegar, Tomato Paste, Smoked Paprika, Rosemary, Black Pepper, Citric Acid
CONTAINS TREE NUTS



butternut
chipotle

Nutrition Facts	
4.6 servings per container	
Serving size 1/2 cup (125g)	
Amount per serving	
Calories	40
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 55mg	2%
Total Carbohydrate 9g	3%
Dietary Fiber 3g	9%
Total Sugars 3g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	0%
Protein 1g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 36mg	2%
Iron 0.7mg	4%
Potassium 259mg	6%

* The % Daily Values (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

INGREDIENTS: Roasted Butternut Squash, Water, Organic Tomatoes, Red Pepper, Celery, Onion, Organic Tomato Paste, Garlic, Chipotle, Black Pepper, Citric Acid.



8 50006 45601 7



8 50006 45602 4



8 50006 45603 1



8 50006 45600 0

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BISCUITS *More Dynamic than a Cracker.*





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Effie's biscuits are unique - complimenting your cracker set vs. competing with existing items. Our products will deliver incremental sales to the shopping cart at a premium price point and strong margin.



OATCAKES *Our Original*

Crisp, buttery layers of toasted oats with a hint of salt. A classic tea biscuit. Delicious with jam, nut butter, or any cheese—from blue to brie.

INGREDIENTS: Wheat Flour, Oats, Butter, Cane Sugar, Organic Palm Oil, Water, Kosher Salt, Baking Soda.



COCOA *with Toasted Coconut*

Malted cocoa with crisp layers of oats and toasted coconut. Top with mascarpone and fresh berries or a bright marmalade.

INGREDIENTS: Wheat Flour, Butter, Oats, Cane Sugar, Organic Barley Malt Extract, Dried Coconut, Cocoa (Processed with Alkali), Water, Kosher Salt, Baking Soda, Turbinado Sugar.



CORN *with a Hint of Anise*

Buttery, crunchy cornmeal biscuit with an unexpected touch of anise. Perfect with coffee or a spread of fresh chèvre and red pepper jelly.

INGREDIENTS: Wheat Flour, Butter, Coarse Corn Meal, Cane Sugar, White Corn Masa Flour, Water, Kosher Salt, Anise Seed, Baking Soda



RYE *with Walnut & Caraway*

Buttery biscuit with stone-ground rye, toasted walnuts and a dash of caraway. Try with fruit chutneys, onion jam or sharp cheddars.

INGREDIENTS: Wheat Flour, Whole Grain Rye Flour, Butter, Organic Barley Malt Extract, Oats, Cane Sugar, Walnuts, Water, Kosher Salt, Caraway Seeds, Baking Soda.



PECAN *with Wildflower Honey*

Southern pecans and whole wheat with a touch of wildflower honey. Pairs great with creamy blue cheese or sweet, summer stone fruits.

INGREDIENTS: Wheat Flour, Butter, Pecans, Whole Wheat Flour, Brown Cane Sugar, Honey, Water, Kosher Salt, Baking Soda.

OATCAKES CORN PECAN COCOA RYE



Awards & Accolades



Sofi™ Awards
 Gold, Silver
 and Bronze



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You may not have selected the fresh produce for this meal from your local farmers, but we did. We use as many local ingredients as we can for our dinners. And unlike other big name frozen dinners (we're not gossipy), your purchase helps our local farmers and the local economy, planting the economic (and literal) seeds for a healthier food system.

AND YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE JUST BUYING A FROZEN DINNER.



Our dinner trays are compostable in municipal composting systems and are made from 100% tree-free renewable resources.

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VERMONTDINNERS.COM

VERMONT VT DINNERS

UNIT INFORMATION
DIMENSIONS: 6.5"L x 5.5"W x 2"D
WEIGHT: 12OZ

CASE INFORMATION
SIZE: 15 UNITS
DIMENSIONS: 12"L x 18"W x 8"D

\$ PER UNIT
\$ PER CASE



BUTTERNUT SQUASH MAC N' CHEESE

Our semi-traditional bake blends VT cheddar and monterey jack cheeses in a butternut squash roux that breaks new comfort-food ground. A hint of black pepper adds a finishing touch.

VEGETARIAN



LUCIOUS SWEET POTATO LASAGNA

The perfect meal: rich ricotta and feta cheese filling layered between sweet potato and zucchini. Topped with homemade marinara and a sprinkling of mozzarella.

VEGETARIAN • GLUTEN FREE • GRAIN FREE



SPAGHETTI SQUASH PAD THAI

Farm-fresh spaghetti squash tossed with egg and julienned carrots and scallions. Flavored with ginger, garlic, and our spicy peanut sauce. It's a trip overseas from your kitchen.

VEGETARIAN • GLUTEN FREE



LENTIL 'N VEGGIFIED SHEPHERD'S PIE

Buttery, homemade mashed potatoes rest atop a bed of tender, sauteed lentils and farm-fresh veggies all tossed in a garlic, sage reduction sauce.

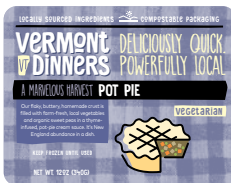
VEGETARIAN • GLUTEN FREE



SOUTH OF THE BORDER ENCHILADA PIE

Say hello to organic black beans and local veggies that are piled high, smothered in our homemade enchilada sauce and wrapped in an organic, local corn tortilla.

VEGETARIAN • GLUTEN FREE • VEGAN



MARVELOUS HARVEST POT PIE

Our flaky, buttery, homemade crust is filled with farm-fresh, local vegetables and organic sweet peas in a thyme-infused, pot-pie cream sauce. It's New England abundance in a dish.

VEGETARIAN



SINCE 1984



VERMONT SPECIALTY FOOD ASSOCIATION

