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Canada's Housewares Magazine

March 2014

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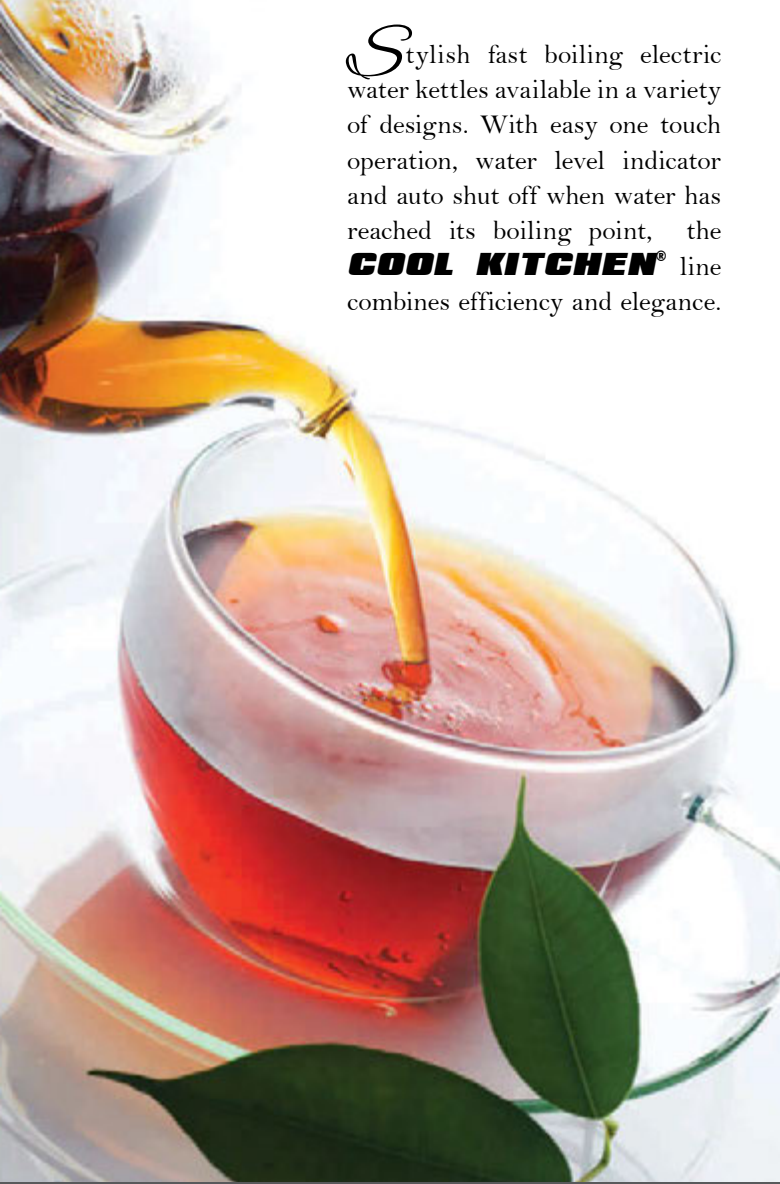
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Contents



32



34



40



80



We look at the latest trends in glass beverageware on page 56.

Features

- 32** **Teatro Verde Cucina wins coveted *gia* award**
We celebrate this year's outstanding housewares retailer as selected by *Home Style* and sponsored by the International Home + Housewares Show.
- 34** **Inside the studio with Peter Franceschini**
Laurie O'Halloran interviews the senior director of the Home division at The Shopping Channel to find out what it takes to make a product a winner on the air.
- 40** **Stirring things up in Burlington, Ontario**
Five years after taking over from Patrick Plunkett, Laura Bilechuk is fulfilling a lifelong dream by operating her own kitchen shop on Burlington's main street.

New Product Reviews

- 46** **Motor-Driven Appliances**
- 54** **Glass Drinkware and Stemware**
- 60** **Food Storage Containers**
- 64** **Cooking with Kids**
- 74** **Ambiente - Frankfurt Spring Fair Highlights**
- 80** **Toronto Gift Fair Housewares Highlights**

Departments



64



70

On our cover



Salton's new VitaPro juice extractor and smoothie maker, right, is a perfect complement to the VitaPro juicer.

6

Calendar of Events

8

Opening Lines

10

People In The News

12

Industry News

24

Show Business

28

Laughing Matters

30

Retail Viewpoint

81

Advertisers Index

82

Industry Spotlight

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Trade Show **Calendar**

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McCormick Place, Chicago

Contact the International Housewares Association

Visit www.housewares.org/attend

April 20 to 23, 2014

HONG KONG HOUSEWARE FAIR

Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre

Contact the Hong Kong Trade Development Council

Visit www.hktdc.com/fair/hkhousewarefair

August 10 to 13, 2014

TORONTO GIFT FAIR

Toronto International Centre/Congress Centre

Contact the Canadian Gift Association

Visit cangift.org

August 16 to 20, 2014

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Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, New York City

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August 30 to September 2, 2014

TENDENCE - FRANKFURT FALL FAIR

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Contact Neeta Correa at Messe Frankfurt Canada

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Opening Lines

Show business should be entertaining

My first experience working a trade show was not a good one. It was the early '80s and I was the 22-year-old editor of a national dental journal. Our industry's two-day trade show, hosted by the Canadian Dental Association, was held in a downtown Toronto hotel. I was eager to attend my first big event, visualizing a cocktail party-like atmosphere with canapés and martinis being sipped as we perused tables displaying dental drills and suction tubing. Dressed in a sharp two-piece suit and four-inch heels, I was ready to mingle. But by the end of the first day, my feet were numb, and so was my mind. Bored after hours of periodontic small talk, I dreaded returning the next day.



My next foray into trade shows was much better. It was in the glory days of the hardware show at the CNE and I was the editor of *Centre Magazine*. Our Sunday night party at my publisher's suite at the Sheraton Centre attracted hundreds of readers and advertisers and every day of the show was filled with media events. I learned to wear sensible shoes and I learned to love trade shows.

Isn't it fascinating that almost 30 years later, with all the incredible technological changes our industry has seen, trade shows continue to play such an important role in our lives? But what has been even more fascinating is watching the lifecycle of shows as they grow, expand, shrink and sometimes disappear.

That Canadian Hardware Show – it filled the entire exhibition place – seemed too big to fail, but it did. It got stale and nothing changed. Buyers got bored, and so did exhibitors. The result was a surge in Canadian attendance at the Chicago housewares fair, and a clear split from the hardware side. Then along came the San Francisco Gourmet Show and thousands of specialty retailers were drawn to the fabulous foodie atmosphere.

Gourmet was a must-attend for many years, but when the Chicago housewares show moved to March, it was the beginning of the end. There simply wasn't room for two housewares shows so close together. Fortunately, the International Housewares Association is a very proactive organization. By listening, and responding to, the needs of both retail visitors and exhibitors, the IHA has created a world-class event in Chicago with an international appeal that is on par with the spectacular Ambiente fair in Frankfurt.

Frankfurt is in a league of its own. Granted, the fact that they own the sprawling, visually dynamic Messe Frankfurt exhibition centre is a big plus. They are able to stage permanent displays that are breathtaking in their scope. (The elaborate press room offers a full-service restaurant, lounge, computer terminals, interview rooms and bar with a daily happy hour!) Exhibitors are treated to an amazing party on the opening night of the fair in which thousands of vendors enjoy gourmet food and live music – all at no charge. By responding to the changing needs of the marketplace, and genuinely showing their appreciation for the customers, Messe Frankfurt is able to keep its finger on the pulse of the marketplace in order to stay relevant.

I mention 'pulse' because I do believe trade shows are living, breathing entities. Without ongoing progress and change as we go through the market cycles, they can easily start to wither and fade. This year, attending the Frankfurt fair immediately after the Toronto Gift Fair brought this thought to mind. One hummed along, the other really had a buzz. Winter weather is always an issue here in Toronto of course, but the housewares hall at the Congress Centre just didn't seem to have the sort of upbeat, positive energy it should have had. It worries me because I really enjoy this show and the opportunity to catch up with all the great retailers in our industry. It's a wonderful way to start the new year and I think we all have a responsibility – organizers, vendors and retailers – to help that housewares hall get its groove back. Those exhibitors who did make an effort by bringing in special guests or introducing new products were rewarded with busy booths and good quality orders. Those who didn't complained about either the traffic or the five-day length of the show and generally contributed to the prevailing negativity on the floor.

We need a good Canadian trade show. Let's try to be positive and make an effort, as an industry, to keep the Toronto Gift Fair exciting – or at least interesting. Remember that with trade shows, as with life, you only get what you give.

– Laurie O'Halloran
laurie@homestylemag.ca

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People In the News

- Browne & Co. has appointed **Trevor Kidd** as national sales manager of the company's Canadian retail division. He



replaces Katherine Samuel, who recently moved over to Browne's commercial division. Browne's COO Peter Braley, says "with his strong experience in developing business,

Kidd will play an important role in continuing to develop the partnerships with Canadian retailers and to enhance the strategic relationships with our international supply partners."

- A Napa Valley investor group led by vintner Pat Stotesbery has acquired a majority interest in **Govino**, the award-winning glassware company. Govino is distributed by B& Marketing in Canada.
- **Sarah Van Raay** has joined Jarden

Consumer Solutions as national account manager. She will be responsible for Jarden's kitchen appliance and personal care and wellness divisions.



- After two years of retirement, **Jack Shein** has returned to the industry to represent two decorative tinware lines: Independent Can of Baltimore and Tin World of China, specializing in custom design packaging. He can be reached by email at sheinj@videotron.ca.

- HTI Buying Group has appointed **Byron Wolfe** as director of sales. Wolfe joins **Karen Skalicky**, who was recently named director of client services, and **Gwen Uhlig**, vice-president of brand alignment, as part of HTI's new senior leadership team.

- Early this year, **Wynne Powell** announced he would be retiring from his position as president and CEO of London Drugs and TLD Computers after 32 years with the company. Wynne has been recognized many times over the years for his achievements (including the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal) and his contribution to London Drugs and his community are far-reaching. Following Wynne's departure in late February, chairman **Brandt Louie** assumed the role of president. **Clint Mahlman**, who started working at LD as a part-time student 30 years ago, has been appointed executive vice president and chief operating officer of LD. Prior to this appointment, Clint was senior vice president.

- The International Housewares Association's board of directors recently completed development of a strategic plan, "Vision 2020," which includes a realignment of IHA's marketing and trade development management to unify its domestic and international programs.

Derek Miller, formerly V.P. of international, will now head show marketing efforts as V.P. of global marketing. **Perry Reynolds**, formerly V.P. marketing and trade development, will lead member services and trade development efforts as V.P. of global trade development.

According to Keith Jaffee, chairman of O2 Cool and chairman of IHA's 2014 board: "Along with the March housewares show and IHA's other value-added member services, this strategic plan has a new component recognizing the importance of engaging the consumer to enhance their exposure to housewares products and trends."

Other member services featured in the plan include trade missions to key foreign markets and delivery of industry educational and networking opportunities.

Correction

In our description of Jascor's new Fresco Salad Spinner in *Home Style's* January/February issue we incorrectly described it as having a 1.5-litre capacity. In fact, it has a very large, 5.1-litre capacity. We apologize for the error.

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Giant Tiger Stores no longer up for sale

Giant Tiger Stores has discontinued the sale process and will remain a 100% privately owned Canadian retailer with its current ownership structure.

Since revealing in October that it was exploring its business options, including a possible sale, the company says it's had the opportunity to carefully assess its strengths and ability to succeed in an increasingly competitive Canadian retail market.

"It was our decision to stay private and continue to develop our successful franchise system," says Giant Tiger chairman and founder, Gordon Reid.

In 2014, the company plans to open seven new stores and renovate 32 existing stores with the New Store Experience format.

Target tests smaller stores in urban areas

Target wants to become a bigger part of city living by going smaller. The discount retailer has long focused on large stores in suburban U.S. markets but recently completed a lease on its smallest store yet, a 20,000-square-foot location in Minneapolis, a test store for a new format called TargetExpress.

The store will be about a fifth the size of Target's smallest format stores to date, and would allow the company to open more locations in dense urban markets, like New York, where 100,000 square feet is hard to come by.

John D. Griffith, executive vice president for property development at Target, says that as more people, and especially young people, opt to live in cities rather than suburbs, Target wanted to remain convenient.

"Minneapolis, where Target is based, is seeing just this sort of influx," he says.

The first TargetExpress will be in the most urban of spaces, at the base of an apartment building called the Marshall, which is under construction near the University of Minnesota campus. The test store is scheduled to open July 27th.

This location was chosen not only for the built-in market of students, ready to

buy dorm decorations and school supplies every year, but because it is less than 10 minutes from Target's headquarters in downtown Minneapolis.

Qubit ranks global housewares retailers

Qubit has revealed its latest benchmark looking at the onsite effectiveness of eight of the top global housewares retail companies and judging which one offers the best customer experience.

Highlights of the study show:

- Ikea is the most visited housewares retailer with more than 42 million monthly visitors, five times more than the nearest competitor.
- Bed, Bath & Beyond offers the best overall customer experience in terms of user journey.
- Pottery Barn's website is the easiest and most intuitive website to navigate.

Ikea's website has the most usable catalogue of products.

- Ikea is also the easiest retailer to purchase from.

Shopify reaches billion dollar mark

Shopify has become Canada's first Internet startup since the dot-com crash to reach a billion-dollar valuation.

The Ottawa e-commerce software company, which enables smaller retailers to launch and manage online stores, has raised \$100-million (U.S.) in a deal led by the venture investing arm of the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System and New York's Insight Venture Partners.

Sources claim the deal values the company at \$1-billion.

"I think everyone in the company has a sense Shopify is doing well," says Tobias Lütke, Shopify's 33-year-old co-founder and CEO, noting that employees own more than 20% of the firm. "Most don't realize how well."

Reaching the \$1-billion level is extremely rare. Website TechCrunch recently determined that only 39 tech firms born since 2003 in the U.S., includ-

ing Facebook and Twitter, have reached the \$1-billion level.

Shopify has been doubling in size every year for the past four years. It recently signed up its 80,000th customer.

The company recently began offering a comprehensive software system that enables retailers to run both physical and online operations on an iPad. Retailers who use Shopify software are on track to book more than \$1.6-billion in sales this year, up from \$132-million in 2010. The company is on pace to earn upwards of \$50-million in revenues per year and has more than 300 employees, up from 140 a year ago.

A typical Shopify customer spends less than \$100 per month to use the software, a tiny fraction of the cost to retailers just a few years ago to operate an e-commerce site.

Walmart Canada has plans for growth

After a year in which Loblaws bought Shoppers Drug Mart to gain instant access to big-city locations and archival Target opened in Canada, Walmart is not ruling out acquisitions as it celebrates its 20th year here with an added push in its growing online business.

"We look at the changing customer dynamic across Canada and we are getting increasingly older and more urban," Shelley Broader, Walmart Canada's CEO, said at the company's annual meeting. Walmart will spend about \$500-million this year on 35 building projects to add more food to its lineup and six new stores between now and next January, bringing its Canadian store count to 395.

"There are all kinds of ways to grow," Broader says. "Acquisition is one way to grow, [building new big boxes] is another, and we have had voracious growth in our Walmart.ca business."

The website launched in earnest in 2013 and currently gets its highest sales in general merchandise, but food is growing very rapidly. In the third quarter of 2013, e-commerce traffic at Walmart.ca rose 42% and sales were up 96%.

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Canucks spend more on food and alcohol

Americans are richer and tend to spend more on average than Canadians do, but not when it comes to food and alcohol, according to a new TD Economics report.

The report found Canadians spend almost \$1,200 more on food and beverage per capita than Americans do. The additional money is spent equally on groceries and alcohol. Canada's food and beverage consumption has always been greater than in the U.S., but it was abnormally high in 2012 when Canadians spent 4.5 times more per capita on beer, wine and liquor than Americans.

The study compares consumer bases

in both countries in terms of demographics, financial positions and spending behaviours. Americans spend an average of \$17,900 per year in retail outlets compared to the average Canadian, who spends \$17,000, with the gap narrowing since the 2008 recession.

U.S. consumers are also more likely than Canadians to shop at general merchandise stores such as WalMart and Target, spending \$600 more in them than Canadians.

America's population is nine times larger, but Canada's population is growing at a faster rate. Our annual population growth (+1.3%) outpaced that of the U.S. (+0.7%) in 2013. Part of the difference can be attributed to a slower pace

of immigration in the U.S.

Americans have higher per capita income and more wealth than Canadians. The average personal disposable income for a Canadian was \$26,888 in 2013; it was \$35,950 south of the border. But since 2007, household income in Canada has grown faster than it has in the U.S.

It also takes a lot more to be in the top 1% in the U.S. than it does in Canada. The one-percenters in the U.S. earn an income of over \$369,000. In Canada, those in the top 1% have an income of greater than \$191,000.

Consumers are nuts for nuts in the U.S.

Recent food market research in the U.S. from NPD finds that nuts rank among the top 10 snack-oriented convenience foods for consumers motivated by health and weight needs.

Nuts are a popular snack for breakfast and morning snack but are eaten throughout the day by consumers who want a nutritious, natural, better-for-you snack, according to NPD's *Snacking in America* report.

In fact, 77% of U.S. households have nuts or seeds on hand and 19% of individuals eat nuts at least once in a two-week period. Nuts are consumed primarily as an in-home snack but are often incorporated into morning, lunch and dinner meals.

Tea is a top trend – even for cocktails!

A growing trend in restaurants and bars, tea cocktails are showing up more often on the drink menus. With cocktails in general soaring in popularity, consumers may soon be trying this at home.

According to the Sterling-Rice Group, a top food trend for 2014 will be to use tea outside of the cup and in dinner, dessert, and cocktail recipes. Chefs have found a hidden treasure in tea cocktails. It adds depth and creates a unique flavor profile that cannot be recreated with traditional mixers, liquors or liqueurs.

Food for Thought

Urbanspoon, the leading mobile restaurant discovery app, has released its Top Dining Trends of 2013 and it's Food Forecast for 2014.

What's Hot...

- 2013 was the year of the cronut. This croissant/doughnut mash-up was the hottest food item last year, followed by two other slightly healthier carbs – ramen and quinoa. The top foods of 2013 include: Cronuts (39%), Ramen (34%), Quinoa (30%), Brussel Sprouts (22%), and Anything smoked (16%).
- Sriracha's fiery flavor dominated this year, with special menu items cropping up to showcase the popular sauce in both fine dining restaurants and fast food chains alike. Urbanspoon critics chose Sriracha as the "hottest" condiment of the year.
- Consumers can't get enough of their favorite celebrity chefs. Some never go out of style including Alton Brown (40%), Mario Batali (39%) and Bobby Flay (34%) The year also saw new stars, like Pioneer Woman Ree Drummond (14%), on the rise. Other chefs, whose new TV shows helped cement their popularity, include Anthony Bourdain (22%), Gordon Ramsay (14%), and Alexandra Guarnaschelli (13%).

What's not...

- California's ban on foie gras may be catching on and food critics have grown tired of 2013's vegetable du jour – kale. Items on their way out include Foie Gras (33%), Kale (27%), Trotters (Pig's Feet) (20%), Octopus (20%), and Juicing (14%).

* Meatless Monday is a trend that most Urbanspoon critics (33%) say has jumped the shark. Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that 70% of respondents say bacon is the food item that never goes out of style. Nouveau Vietnamese followed the meatless Monday day as a fading trend (20%).

- Who are Urbanspoon's critics tired of seeing in the culinary world? Paula Deen leads the way with 60% of respondents. Following in her footsteps are some of TV's more polarizing personalities: Rachael Ray (57%), Martha Stewart (54%), and Guy Fieri (44%) of *Diners, Drive-ins and Dives*.



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American Retailers In The News

Nordstrom is the leader on Pinterest

With over 4.4 million followers, Nordstrom is the number one brand followed on Pinterest. With Nordstrom's imminent arrival here (its first Canadian store opens in Calgary this September), Canadian retailers need to recognize the importance of social media.

For those unfamiliar, Pinterest is a photo sharing website. Users may create and manage theme-based image collections. They may then browse other pinboards for images and 'repin' them to their own pinboards, or 'like' photos. Its popularity continues to grow and it now boasts over 70 million users.

Almost 70% of Pinterest users are female, and 57% of all posts are food-related. Only 6% of Pinterest users have connected their pages to their Facebook accounts. Nordstrom has taken Pinterest one step further with popular items on Pinterest displayed in-store with a red tag and it seems to be paying off as Pinterest shoppers tend to spend more than users referred from other social media.

Sales still rising for the top 25 retailers

Global consultancy Deloitte says revenue at the world's 250 biggest retailers has risen despite ongoing economic weakness. *The Global Powers Of Retailing* report reveals turnover at the world's top 250 retailers rose 4.9% to \$4.3 trillion (\$4.75 trillion) last financial year. (All

figures in U.S. dollars.)

Wal-Mart easily retains its spot as the world's biggest retailer, with revenue of \$469 billion in 2012. British-based global supermarket chain Tesco was a long way behind in second place with \$101 billion in revenues, with Costco came in third at \$99 billion, followed by France's Carrefour at just under \$99 billion.

About 25% of the global revenue from these top retailers comes from overseas operations.

E-Commerce accounts for an increasing share of total retail revenues, with the top 250 retailers generating 7.7% of their sales online. The report also shows that online sales are growing fastest among Asia-Pacific retailers, while the opposite is true for North America.

Upscale chains look for premium locations

The battle for retail supremacy in Canada has pitted the most elite U.S. chains (Saks and Nordstrom) against each other in Toronto and it is now poised to make its way across the country.

Real estate companies, hungry for consumers in the increasingly denser downtown cores populated by free-spending young Canadians in condominium towers, are joining the fray.

Cadillac Fairview, a subsidiary of the Teacher's Pension Plan Board, is expanding its Eaton Centre footprint with the \$650-million purchase of HBC's adjacent 850,000 square foot mall space,

and agreed to lease the space back to Saks and Hudson's Bay for 50 years. The move was a way to secure a downtown fiefdom that would include both brands within spitting distance of one another.

Meanwhile, Nordstrom will open in the north end of Toronto's Eaton Centre as Sears departs. Will it also move to Canada's premier mall, Toronto's Yorkdale Shopping Centre, owned by Oxford Properties Corp., also controlled by another giant pension fund? (Saks set to open up to seven stores across Canada.)

It is likely that Saks and Nordstrom will continue to battle it out within close proximity of each another as they move across Canada's retail hotbeds. Nordstrom is set to open in spring 2015 at Ottawa's Rideau Centre, and in the fall of 2015 at Pacific Centre in Vancouver. Hudson's Bay Co. has outlets across the street from both malls.

Restoration Hardware sees sales gains

Last year, Restoration Hardware grew its net income an impressive 389% to \$13 million from \$2.7 million in the same period a year earlier. Net revenues for the third quarter of fiscal 2013 increased 39% to \$395.8 million from \$284.2 million, while same-store sales increased 29%.

Chairman Gary Friedman credits net revenue growth and advertising savings as factors driving the company's net income increase.

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Cool Gear signs deal for FIFA World Cup

Cool Gear International has signed a licensing deal with Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA). The deal will promote FIFA World Cup events on Cool Gear products in anticipation of the 2014 FIFA World Cup set for Brazil this June.

The products will include Cool Gear reusable chillers, tumblers and the cool-gear can and will be for sale at retail this spring. This is the first time the two organizations have worked together.

Electrolux to debut Frigidaire products

Electrolux's recent licensing agreements with Dura-Kleen and Libra to manufacture Frigidaire branded plastic and glass food storage is the company's first foray in the U.S., through licensing, into a non-electric category.

Dura-Kleen will debut plastic Frigidaire food storage at the International Home + Housewares Show in March, with product available to ship this spring; glass Frigidaire food storage from Libra is still in development.

Green Mountain looks at new opportunities

The Coca-Cola Company and Green Mountain Coffee Roasters have signed a 10-year agreement to collaborate on the development and introduction of Coca-Cola's global brand portfolio for use in the forthcoming Keurig Cold at-home beverage system. Under the global strategic agreement, GMCR and Coca-Cola will cooperate to bring the Keurig Cold beverage system to consumers around the world. The companies also entered into a Common Stock Purchase Agreement whereby The Coca-Cola Company will purchase a 10% minority equity position in GMCR.

As part of the strategic collaboration, GMCR will be The Coca-Cola Company's exclusive partner for the production and sale of the single-serve, pod-based cold beverages.

The Keurig Cold single-serve beverage system is currently under development with expected availability in 2015. Keurig Cold will use precisely formulated single-serve pods to dispense freshly-made cold beverages including carbonated drinks, enhanced waters, juice drinks, sports drinks and teas.

In other news, GMCR has also announced a departure from its pod-based systems with the launch of a new push-button coffee brewing machine. Called Keurig 2.0, the machine is able to brew up to 30 ounces of coffee at a time and is expected to go on sale this fall.

The announcement helps explain what Green Mountain has been doing with its R&D money, an expense category that swelled from \$18 million in 2011 to \$58 million last year. According to recent research, including feedback from Keurig's new retail store, a lot of consumers are interested in pots – rather than cups – of coffee. About one-quarter of Keurig users still pull out a different device at least once a week to make a full pot of coffee.



Here comes the new bride

As Today's Bride Magazine celebrates its 35th anniversary in 2014, the publishers have looked at how weddings have changed over the years.

- The average age for a first time bride has risen from 24 to almost 30.
- Couples now pay for 50% of all weddings.
- Destination weddings, once a novelty, now account for 12% to 15% of all weddings.
- Almost every wedding expense has risen by 200% to 400% except for wedding gowns. The average cost of a dress has only risen by 25%.
- The groom has replaced the bride's mother as the secondary registry decision maker.
- Videographers were virtually nonexistent in 1980.

Sears targets the middle class shopper

The president of Sears Canada believes the future of the retail chain rests in the hands of middle-class shoppers. Doug Campbell recently told the *Calgary Herald* that the company has been around for 61 years on the Canadian retail landscape and its intention is to be around at least another 60 years.

"In Toronto there's a fascination lately with luxury retail with Nordstrom coming in and Saks Fifth Avenue. Everyone is taking their product offering and moving it towards luxury," said Campbell during a visit at the Sears' Southcentre Mall store. "The reality is that most Canadians are not luxury retail customers. The reality is most Canadians are middle class, middle income, suburban families.

"Canadians even as they move away from the middle class or become a little bit more successful and have more disposable income, they still have middle class sensibilities . . . Canadians are more likely to be more fiscally responsible with the money that they spend. I believe a lot of those retailers are essentially abandoning the middle class. Sears has always been in that middle Canadian area of the spectrum and we're going to stay there and serve that customer. There's tremendous opportunity in market size for us."

In late January, Sears Canada announced a second round of layoffs, eliminating 624 workers. Two weeks ago prior to that Sears said about 1,600 positions would be affected as it moved ahead with plans to shutter its three Canadian call centres and reduce staff at its warehouses. Most of the reductions are in middle management at the stores. It will also rework its regional and head office structure to reflect the changes.

Sears Canada is trying to reduce costs as part of a three-year turnaround plan. Last year, the company made a round of cuts that affected around 20,000 people.

The retailer operates 181 corporate stores, 241 Hometown appliance stores, 1,400 merchandise pickup locations and 101 travel offices.



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Soup and salad still tops with Americans

Americans remain enamored with soup, that classic comfort food, and salad, a quintessential healthy fare. The emphasis on healthy eating was evident in recent research from Technomic's *Left Side of the Menu: Soup & Salad Consumer Trend Report*.

Across the foodservice spectrum, operators are capitalizing on the popularity of soup and salad. But restaurants now face considerable competition from the retail segment as 54% of consumers told Technomic that they source soup from home at least once a week.

The study also found that 50% of consumers want to try new and unique

soups. Further, more than a third (35%) of consumers say they purchase soup because they want to try new varieties; 21% say the same for salad.

Ethnic and innovative soups, such as Asian-style ramen or chilled varieties, are poised for growth, particularly among younger consumers. Kale, chopped and grain-based salads are still trending forward at the restaurant level and at retail in prepared foods.

Mint is poised to make a comeback

A panel of trendspotters named low-sugar beverages, mint flavours and crisps among the top product trends at the Winter Fancy Food Show in San Francisco. Sriracha, the fiery Thai chili sauce, was one of the top trends, showing up in snacks, chocolates and jams (though *UrbanSpoon* says it's slipping.)

Mint has made a comeback as a pop-

ular flavor in a number of treats. Snacks have evolved well past the common potato chip. Manufacturers now deliver exciting flavors and unexpected ingredients for more mindful snacking choices.

There were also more low-sugar beverages on the show floor.

Sweet and savory food trends for 2014

With more than one billion visits each year, Allrecipes is the world's largest digital food brand. Its '2014 Food Trends Report' provides a preview of what home cooks will be preparing, eating and shopping for in the year ahead.

Top Food Trends for 2014

Sweets Take a Back Seat to Savory

The dual savory/sweet flavor of salted caramel is the top flavor choice for desserts with a 61% preference rating. Regardless of flavor, home cooks across the country prefer cupcakes (61%) to ice cream (34%) for after-dinner treats.

Putting Meat under the Microscope

When purchasing specialty meats, nearly half of home cooks (49%) say hormone-free and grass-fed will continue to be their top criteria.

Home Cooks Look Outside the Box

More consumers are making formerly-boxed meals from scratch thanks to a growing DIY trend in the kitchen. Most home cooks are opting to prepare these dishes from scratch to enjoy homemade flavors (41%), eat "cleaner" (29%), and save money (18%).

More Exotic Nut Butters Take Over

Nearly a quarter (24%) of home cooks recognize the health benefits of nut butters, such as almond and hazelnut butter, as an alternative to peanut butter.

Going Coconuts

From oil to milk and water, the tropical fruit has invaded nearly every phase of cooking and will continue to do so.

Pickling More than Pickles

Home cooks continue to see appeal in fermented foods, pickling everything from asparagus to kimchi. Baby Boomers are among the largest group of home fermenters, with 31% making a pickled food in the last year versus just 21% of Millennials.

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Amazon attracting more affluent consumers

According to The Shullman Luxury and Affluence report, most Americans with a lot of money are now shopping at Amazon. In fact, 69% of the adults in the \$250,000+ household income segment have shopped there in the past year.

This study provides selected insights regarding American consumers according to their household incomes:

- Adults living in households with total incomes of \$75,000 or more comprise 41% of all adults and is the level where marketers believe affluence begins.
- About 3% of households have an income of \$250,000, the level where many marketers believe luxury begins.
- The top 1% make \$500,000 or more. This is definitely a luxury consumer.

Marketers and retailers need to start thinking about how they are going to compete with Amazon as it continues to penetrate this marketplace, offering upscale consumers more shopping-related benefits such as Sunday deliveries.

Attitudinally, 35% of Amazon's customers and 59% of its \$500,000+ household-income customers claim they like to buy designer or luxury brands. Not only are a substantial portion of Amazon's customers attitudinally predisposed to buying luxury brands, about a quarter (28%) report they purchased a luxury from one or more retailers in the past 12 months, with this luxury purchasing level rising to 50% among the \$250,000+ income segment and 72% among the \$500,000 income segment.

Ironically, Amazon and Walmart are the only two retailers from which the majority of Americans (59%) made a purchase in the past year. Walmart reached more adults (with household incomes of less than \$75,000) while Amazon reached many more affluent consumers. According to this survey, Walmart customers' average income is about \$76,000 while Amazon's average is about \$89,000.

Generation Y has a different approach to brands

While Gen Y's relationship with brands has long been known to be unlike their parents', a new study from the Boston Consulting Group reveals just how different they really are. Called *The Reciprocity Principle: How Millennials Are Changing the Face of Marketing*, the study is based on 4,000 Millennials, the 13-to-34 year-old segment that is expected to account for about \$1.3 trillion in direct annual spending. The study found that Gen Y sees status, success, and luxury as increasingly important, especially among males. But the biggest differences are found in the way they engage with brands, and their expectation that brands listen and respond to them.

The study found Gen Y is more engaged in social media and mobile technology, and they demand 24/7 access. Some 52% of Millennials use social media to "like" a brand, compared with 33% of Baby Boomers. And twice as many Millennials as Boomers use their phones in stores.

While 61% of older consumers are swayed by the opinions of medical or financial experts in marketing, less than half of Gen Y consumers are. Instead, they rely on the opinions of family, friends, and strangers. And Millennials are intensely starstruck: They are twice as likely as Gen Xers (ages 35 to 49) to be influenced by celebs, and four times more likely than Boomers.

They are more focused on reputation, and 50% say they believe brands "say something about who I am, my values, and where I fit in." Not surprisingly, 48% say they try to select brands that actively support social causes.

The study also found some sharp breaks between male and female Millennials. While young men are much more attentive to external recognition, and mention values such as status, success and craftsmanship, female Millennials are more stressed out. In the last two years, they have begun to push back against digital demands, and are more consciously making efforts to unplug and simplify their lives.

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Advertising Material Due:

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Victorinox officially merges with Wenger

Victorinox Swiss Army and Wenger officially joined forces on January 1st. Under the Victorinox Swiss Army name, the brand will introduce over 50 new Swiss Army Knives as part of the Delémont Collection as well as a line of Swiss Military watches.

“The culmination of the merger between Victorinox Swiss Army and Wenger means exciting things are on the horizon for both our brand and the industry as a whole,” says North American Victorinox Swiss Army President, René Stutz.

In 2005, Victorinox purchased 113-year-old Wenger of Delémont, Switzerland in order to keep it in Swiss hands. Since both brands built their knife businesses on the heritage of the Swiss Army Knife, consumers often couldn’t distinguish between the two brands. Combining knife assortments under the Victorinox Swiss Army brand will provide a more coherent brand experience.



Several new items were unveiled at the January gift fair, including the beautiful Grand Gourmet Collection featuring knives made from chrome-molybdenum steel with ergonomic rosewood handles, shown above.



Toronto Gift Fair visitors had an opportunity to build their very own Swiss Army knife at the Victorinox exhibit. Shown above, Denise Gaze of *Home Style* created her own one-of-a-kind design (with corkscrew) in just 15 minutes.



Allan Weil, left, owner of Classic Chef, is shown at the gift show with Lawrence Burden of Kiss The Cook. It’s the last time Classic Chef will have it’s own booth now that it’s been purchased by David Shaw Tableware.

David Shaw Tableware buys Classic Chef

The David Shaw Group and Classic Chef Corporation have announced the merger of the two companies. According to Classic Chef president Allan Weil: “This union of our tabletop and housewares brands will allow us to more readily supply the needs of our customers. We look forward to combining our strengths to find and develop new product lines; to build upon our relationships with retailers, and to take the business to the next level.”

Classic Chef (distributor of the popular Zyliss line) will be moving to the David Shaw facility in Toronto and together will be working to take advantage of the synergies this union will bring. Allan and Debbie Weil will continue to oversee the growth and development of the housewares division at the David Shaw Group.

Corning goes from cookware to phones

Corning, a 163-year-old company that once made cookware and railroad lanterns, has emerged as an improbable star of the \$280 billion smartphone industry as it develops curved screens and glass that repels germs.

As smartphone sales slow, Apple, Samsung Electronics and Google are increasingly counting on display technology to lure consumers. That’s elevated

the importance of Corning, the top supplier of glass for high-end phones. Like the chip makers of Silicon Valley, the company is under pressure to build products that are both thinner and stronger – whether that means better withstanding scratches, blocking glare or taking on new shapes.

The challenge for Corning is to come up with that next innovation before a competitor does. While the company is the market leader in smartphone-cover glass, suppliers that use other treated glasses or materials could upend its position. But optimism that Corning can maintain its advantage sent the stock up 41% last year.

Corning got its start in 1851 as a maker of window glass, ceramics and other materials. It developed the first glass enclosure for Thomas Edison’s incandescent light bulb, and that product went on to account for about half its business by 1908. It also created Pyrex glassware in the early 1900s, though it sold most of that business in 1998 to focus on high-tech investments.

Housewares brands open New York store

Housewares brands Rosenthal, Sambonet and Canadian cookware manufacturer Paderno have teamed up to open Cucina & Tavola, their first U.S. store in the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn, N.Y. The three brands, which joined forces in 2009, celebrated the store’s official grand opening Jan. 22nd. Located at 235 Grand St., it sells kitchenware and tabletop settings.

Cucina & Tavola, which means “kitchen and table” in Italian, is a one-stop shop for kitchenware, tabletop and related accessories. Rosenthal’s German porcelain dinnerware, Sambonet’s Italian-designed kitchen accessories and Paderno cookware are all well represented in the store. New items are displayed alongside closeouts at 80% off.

Designed by Hellow Studio Design, the 1,600-square-foot store has ample space to host small events and cooking demonstrations with local chefs.



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Emerald Expositions acquires GLM

Last January Emerald Expositions announced that it had completed the acquisition of George Little Management (GLM) from Providence Equity Partners for \$335 million.

The purchase price, including transaction expenses, was funded by \$200 million of debt and a \$140 million equity investment from Onex Partners. Emerald was acquired by Onex Partners in June 2013.

GLM, based in White Plains, NY, operates 20 trade shows, including NY Now (formerly the New York International Gift Fair), Surtex and the International Contemporary Furniture Fair.

Emerald, based in San Juan Capistrano, California, produces more than 65 trade shows and conference events a year in a variety of industries.

David Loechner, CEO of Emerald,

says "GLM is a truly outstanding company with an exciting portfolio and an experienced and talented workforce. This acquisition expands upon our position as a leading tradeshow organizer in the U.S. I am excited about the opportunities that will result from bringing these two quality portfolios together."

Charles McCurdy, the departing CEO of GLM, says "this transaction demonstrates the strength of GLM's shows that have grown successfully thanks to the effectiveness of the GLM team and Providence."

He adds "this is a compelling opportunity going forward for GLM and its stakeholders, and I wish David Loechner and his team the best of luck as they seek to further expand GLM's product offerings and accelerate growth."

The transaction was finalized at the end of January. Emerald was acquired by Onex Partners III in June 2013.

Atlanta sees more housewares exhibits

The first major trade show of the year – the Atlanta International Gift & Home Furnishings Market – completed its week-long run on January 14 and was reportedly a huge success.

National and international attendance and first-to-market buyer totals rose over previous years. On-site actual registrations for the market showed healthy year-over-year gains with increases as high as 53% posted on key attendance days.

By close of business Tuesday, first-day actual on-site registrations exceeded all previous opening-day totals. And pre-registrations posted their highest gains in six years. Market first-day registrations included retailers and designers from all 50 states and more than 90 countries.

Gourmet Catalog co-located its *Start of the Year Member Meeting* and trade show with Atlanta Gift. In all, about 150 vendors participated, showing off the latest additions to their lines.

One of the hot trends spotted: Table Swoon. Everything needed to make a striking table – chargers, napkins, placemats, table runners, centerpiece, accessories and more - is included in one box with this new product. This idea is the brain child of Natalie Engelhardt and is available with five different table setting designs. All have a SRP of \$99 and are available through Gourmet Catalog.

The next spring edition of the Atlanta International Gift & Home Furnishings Market is set for January 6 to 13, 2015.

Positive response to Interior Lifestyle China

Visitor and exhibitor numbers revealed a positive response to the new Interior Lifestyle China fair held in Shanghai last September 25th to 27th.

Organized by Messe Frankfurt Shanghai, the fair attracted 17, 015 visitors from 37 countries. There were 282 exhibitors displaying their wares, including new pavilions from India and the U.S. as well as France, Germany and Taiwan.

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NY NOW winter debut was well attended

Quality was the key measure of success for companies participating in the winter debut of NY NOW, (formerly NYIGF), held at the Jacob Javits Center February 1st to 6th. Many exhibitors among the market's total 2,500 reported strong order writing, most notably from new accounts and large retailers, despite two winter storms and the overlap of the 2014 Super Bowl.

"NY NOW had several very strong days of attendance – particularly on Saturday, Sunday and Tuesday – and buyers who made it to New York City and to the Market were here to shop," says Christian Falkenberg, NY NOW director. "Exhibitors reported seeing their key accounts and making new connections with both domestic and international buyers."

NY NOW attendees represented 50 states and 74 countries, with Canada,

Japan, Mexico, Brazil, Columbia, Australia, and the U.K. representing the top sources of international visitors.

Four companies were award winners in the gourmet housewares categories.

BEST OF SHOW:

Lifetime Brands for its Savora Colander, a stainless steel colander with a premium, baked-on finish and drainage holes, designed in a vortex pattern.

COOKWARE WINNER:

Zoku for its Ice Ball, which forms perfect ice spheres in a safe silicone mold.

DINING WINNER:

SPARQ Home for its Dining S/4 Vodka Shooters with Caddy.

KITCHEN PREP WINNER:

Aquaovo (of Montreal) for its OVOP-UR, an offline gravitational filter made from natural materials fusing age-old traditions with tomorrow's trends.

The Best New Product Award judges were: Faith Durand, thekitchn.com; Sharon Franke, *Good Housekeeping*;

Joanne Friedrick, *Gourmet Business*; Laurie O'Halloran, *Home Style*; Duke Ratliff, *HFN*; Amy Stavis, *Tableware Today*; and Anna Wolfe, *The Gourmet Retailer*.

The fair also featured a five-day schedule of educational and social programming plus industry events such as the Gift For Life 22nd Anniversary Party for Life Fundraiser and the popular NY NOW Night On Broadway, featuring *MOTOWN THE MUSICAL*.

Hong Kong serves as sourcing hub

The Hong Kong Houseware Fair will be held from April 20th to 23rd at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. A sourcing hub for houseware products, Hong Kong exported \$28.8 billion worth of household goods in 2013.

As Asia's largest fair of its kind, Hong Kong Houseware Fair serves as a launching pad for the latest products, providing an efficient platform for both exhibitors and buyers to meet.

The 2014 event is expected to attract over 2,000 exhibitors, with new exhibiting countries, Oman and Poland. More than 27,000 buyers from 127 countries and regions came through the doors in 2013. This year will also see the debut of a Baby & Children's Homeware zone. With both baby and economic booms in Asian markets, especially in the Chinese mainland and India, this new section will be a key draw.

The fair features a number of themed zones, focusing on key categories in houseware, including emerging sectors, ensuring that buyers can easily connect with the right exhibitors for them.

A "Creative Arts & Cultural Craft" display will showcase paintings, sculptures, antiques, contemporary art pieces and traditional handicrafts. "Avenue of Inspiration" aims at nurturing new designers and artists who are specialists in houseware and home textiles products.

The Houseware Fair takes place concurrently with the HKTDC Hong Kong International Home Textiles and Furnishings Fair, providing houseware exhibitors with an extra source of buyers focused on homeware-related items.





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The customer is not *always* right

By Denise Gaze

That old adage “the customer is always right” is attributed to Harry Gordon Selfridge, who founded Britain’s Selfridges department store chain in the 1900s. The phrase was coined during a kinder, gentler era, however, and it may not hold up anymore. With consumers more demanding, and more aggressive, than ever, does this motto even have relevance in the current selling environment? Consumers instantly turn to social media today to tell the world about a bad customer service experience. But the public rarely hears anything from the retailer’s side. Imagine if you were to post some of the outrageous customer behaviour that you’ve witnessed over the years?

Nowadays customers can easily spread negative, untrue or hurtful gossip about your store – anonymously and without repercussions. Yet retailers must still bend over backwards to keep those customers coming back.

Retailers live in understandable fear of a complaint going viral. It could irreparably damage their business. The fact is, all retailers put up with a lot of frustration, from children running loose in the stores without supervision to the ultimate insult, shoplifting.

CBC’s *Marketplace* recently aired an episode called “Point Of No Return”. During the program, three consumers learned how to negotiate a refund by challenging a store’s return policy. The items were returned without original packaging and with no receipts yet the customer wanted a full refund. After learning effective negotiation tactics, each consumer was able to get their money back from the retailer. The test pushed the boundaries of store policy,

but did the retailer have a choice?

How far would you go to keep a customer happy? Let’s be honest. Some customers are bullies, others are a P.I.T.A (pain in the ass). But as all retailers know, a customer who gets good service will tell one person. A customer who gets bad service tells 10 others.

At the Toronto Gift Fair, we talked to a couple of retailers to hear their position on customer returns and we asked them to recall their worst experiences.

The following conversation is real, and it’s just the tip of the iceberg.

••••

Retailer: I remember it was a Tuesday morning. A gentleman came rushing into my store with a crazed look and what appeared to be dark, congealing blood splattered on his shirt. “How can I help you sir?” I asked. He plunked a well-used chocolate fountain down on the counter. It was then that I realized he was covered in chocolate, not blood, and breathed a sigh of relief.

Customer: This thing just exploded, spewing chocolate everywhere – on my drapes and on my white carpeting!

Retailer: No problem, sir. We are always happy to replace a defective machine.

Customer: What I want is for you to clean up the mess in my house!

••••

After a discussion with the store’s owner, it was agreed that the retailer would take full responsibility for the mess. They even hired professionals to steam clean his entire apartment.

It was a huge relief when the satisfied Willy Wonka finally left the store. In this instance, the retailer capitulated and gave the customer what he wanted. However, upon closer inspection of the

chocolate fountain it turned out the culprit was nuts! The directions specifically warned not to use coconut, a chocolate bar with nuts or anything else that might clog the machine. Unfortunately, customers rarely read directions.

In retail, no two days are the same. On one day, you might be besieged by protestors because you carry a certain brand of soda maker. The next day, you may find a pair of well worn men’s underwear on the floor of the bathroom.

All over this great country, retailers put on a smile every morning and face the unknown. Most customers are wonderful, but you must also be ready for those who are not.

Another retailer told me a story about a woman who walked out of his shop carrying a full set of high-end cookware. He couldn’t believe his eyes. The store has signs posted everywhere telling customers they are being monitored by cameras. So the retailer followed her out to her car and demanded she open the trunk. He picked up the cookware and took it back into his store. In hindsight he regrets not calling the police as the trunk told a story of someone who had been shoplifting all morning.

You just never know who is going to walk through your door. The right customer or the wrong customer, retailing is always an adventure. Being able to laugh about it certainly helps.

.....
This new column will focus on the customer service issues that impact retailers on a daily basis. If you have a horror story, a memorable experience, or a funny episode you would like to share with us, please contact Denise at jerseygirl_1956@hotmail.com.

WHY I LOVE IT

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The Ricardo glass collection by Lehmann was created in partnership with the prestigious Winemaker Association of France (Union des Œnologues de France) and Mr. Gérard Basset, Word's best sommelier 2010. The unique design of these glasses is ideal for observing wine's colour, while their long stem prevents wine from warming. Their curves have been specifically designed to enable better restitution of wine aromas and the thinness of the rim enhances wine tasting experience. The high performance crystal is lead-free and offers excellent transparency, brilliance and sonority. This glass collection features high breakage resistance, even after repeated dishwasher cycles. It is ideal for daily use as well as professional use.

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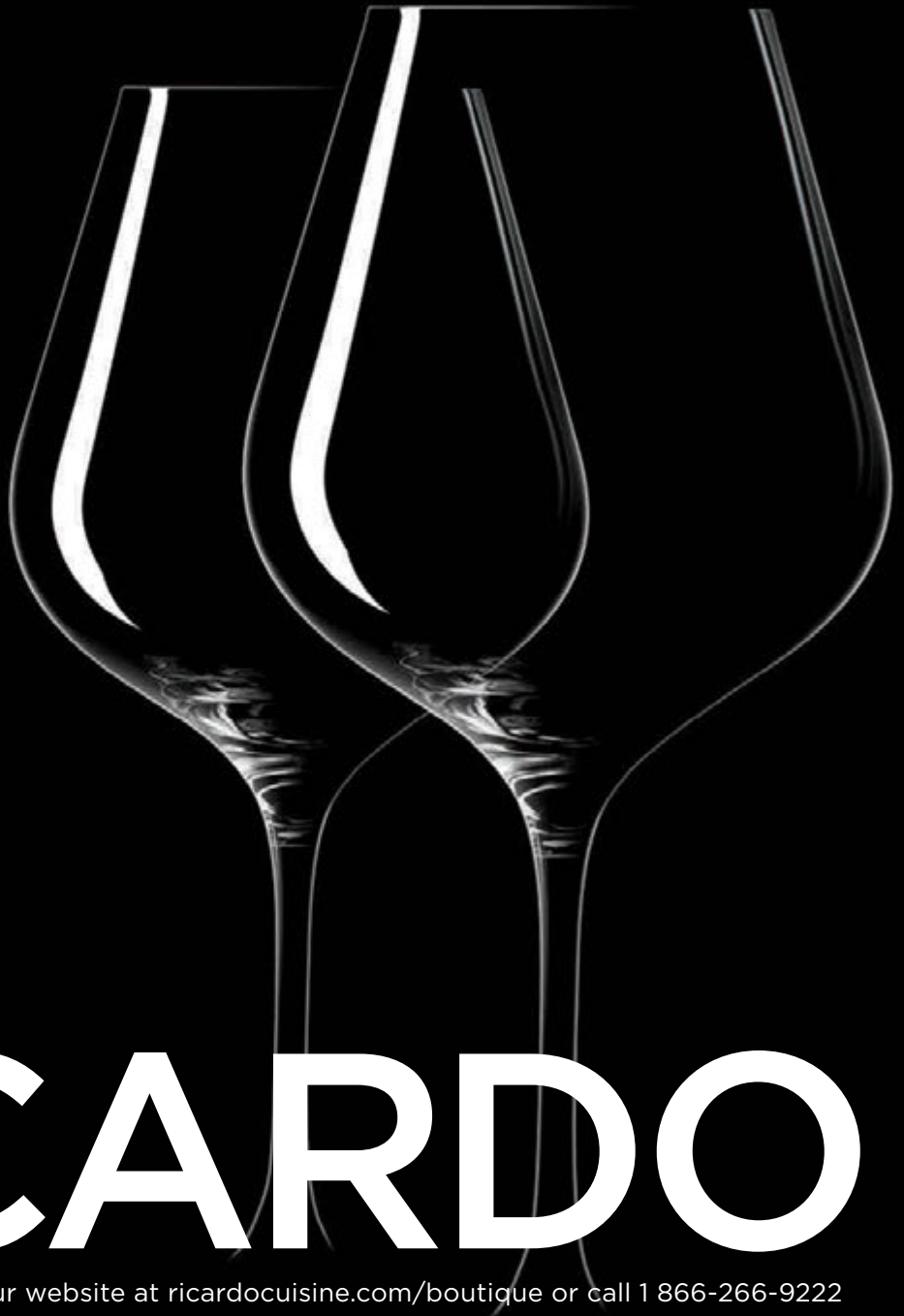
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Retail really is a viable career choice



By Candace Sutcliffe, Retail Manager, C.A. Paradis/Chef's Paradise, Ottawa

I love what I do. I have always worked in retail but little did I know this is where I would stay. My first job – at 14 – was as a sales clerk for an upscale wicker furniture/giftware store in Northern Ontario. I caught that retail bug early and since then, have unintentionally worked my way up through various aspects of the industry, for businesses both big and small.

Looking back, I can't think of any other profession that offers such a variety of opportunities to learn many different, transferable skills such as buying, merchandising, marketing, finance, e-commerce and human resources. These can be used almost anywhere in the world, in virtually any industry.

Retail is also one of the few industries in which you can start at the bottom and work your way right to the top. Yet I can't recall anyone ever suggesting retail as a plausible career option for me. Instead, the Sutcliffe Medical Faculty (as I like to call my family) were trying to sway me into the medical field. I think they're still trying to figure out exactly what it is I do I everyday! I reply "usually something new and unpredictable".

Retail has long suffered from a stigma of low wages, long hours and high turnover with little educational support to develop talent. The Canadian Retail Institute (a division of the Retail Council of Canada) recently launched an online certification program "dedicated to strengthening the industry by encouraging retail education, increasing career awareness and developing certification and training programs to improve workforce skills". CRI's goal is to promote employment opportunities in the retail sector through career fairs, school visits and

apprenticeship programs.

While they are not alone in their efforts, finding and retaining top talent continues to be an ongoing challenge, especially as traditional roles are altered by new technologies.

The Millennial generation is seeking instant job gratification and independence. They want top-tier positions or favour self-employment rather than 'working for the man', making it all the more difficult to attract young talent with the technical skills required to keep a retail organization moving forward.

Corporate culture is the top criteria for Gen Y, allowing smaller firms greater opportunity to scoop them up in a tough job market. My friend's brother graduated with a Bachelor of Economics in 2008. After a short stint at a large financial institution, he had his heart set on opening a franchise for a local chain of kitschy burger shops. He had never worked in a restaurant a day in his life, but he loved their culture. He felt he had the education and the business savvy to successfully open his own restaurant. The owner (who later sold to a VC group) refused to give him a franchise unless he worked every single position, with the corresponding pay, from dishwasher and line cook to waiter and then finally store manager. This would help him better understand every aspect of the business.

The strategy paid off. He went on to open the first two franchises in southern Ontario and they are among the top performing restaurants in the portfolio. The experience showed him how to better manage his businesses *and* gave him valuable insight on how to hire.

As businesses continue to consolidate, retailers are favouring staff who can per-

form multiple roles. Industry employment growth is trending to technical and managerial positions which enable retailers to grow into efficient, integrated, multi-channel, merchandising/selling operations, ultimately affecting the pool of available employees in the lower pay positions.

Retired baby boomers are a great source to fill entry level positions, as this generation continue to redefine retirement by taking on part-time jobs. While retailers can benefit from their flexible schedules, financial independence and work ethic, they unfortunately are not a long-term solution for key positions, and may be challenged by new technologies.

Creativity and innovation continue to propel our industry. Much like every other industry, technology is also changing the hiring process. Glassworks.com is a web-based job review site which shares real time reviews of potential employers, available positions with job descriptions and also pay scale comparisons. The website pools job postings from over 20,000 employment listings, newsprint ads as well as company hiring sites which are then filtered by region. They also provide an annual report card on who the top employers are within various industries and why.

While tapping into higher education is still key to developing talent, retail needs to find new ways to promote itself as a thriving industry with huge potential for growth. But in order to attract a younger audience of future quality workers, we need to first start to understand what it is they are looking for. ☺



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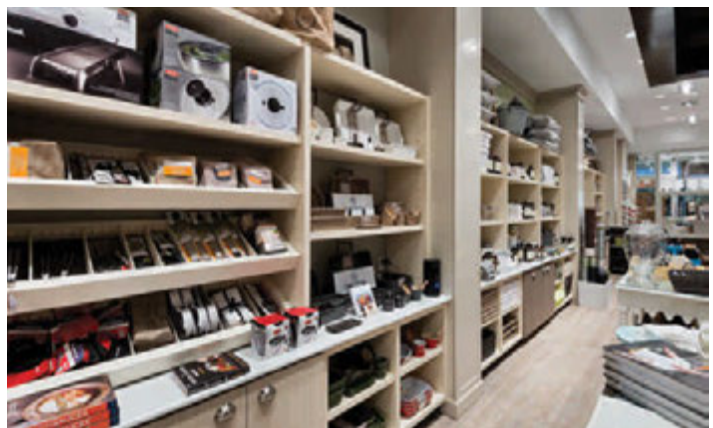
TEATRO VERDE CUCINA

Congratulations to Teatro Verde Cucina! This chic, modern kitchen shop in Toronto's Bayview Village shopping mall has been selected as the 2013/14 recipient of the Global Innovator Award (gia) for housewares merchandising excellence.

Owners Shawn Gibson (below left) and Michael Pellegrino were already operating two Teatro Verde home decor shops when they decided to venture into the culinary field in the spring of 2013. The stunning, 2,000-square-foot shop (it was featured in our July issue) is like no other. The eclectic decorating pieces, combined with basic kitchen items, make each customer's trip an intoxicating visual experience.

The store is divided into four distinct sections: Trends; Kitchen Library; Kitchen Gifts' and Core Kitchen. The products are showcased against neutral tones and natural woods. In terms of packaging, less is more, with most products taken out of the box and displayed in a visually dynamic way.

Shawn and Michael will now travel to Chicago for the International Home + Housewares Show where they will be honoured along with over 20 other national winners from around the globe. At the annual gia gala on Sunday, March 14th, five of these retailers will be selected as global honourees. We'll have all the results in our May issue.





Teatro Verde creates product combinations like no other retailer. The store is a virtual laboratory designed to analyze and solve problems while creating a beautiful shopping atmosphere.



Broadcast news

Most retailers want products that don't require extensive demonstrations by staff. At The Shopping Channel, that's *exactly* what Peter Franceschini is looking for.

By Laurie O'Halloran

Peter Franceschini has known from a very young age that retail would likely be his destiny. Growing up in the northern Ontario mining town of Sudbury, he spent his teen years working in one of the half dozen clothing stores his parents owned. At the age of 15, Peter and his brother would drive to meetings with vendors – together they did much of the buying in addition to managing the stores. But when he graduated from Laurentian University with a degree in economics in 1983, he knew it was time to leave Sudbury and head south to Toronto, where many of his more adventurous friends were already living. It only took a year before he was enrolled in HBC's retail training program.

"Retail wasn't really something I planned on as a career," he says, "it just seemed to happen naturally."

That's probably because he was a natural as a merchandiser, having trained in the family stores for so many years. At The Bay, he was promoted to planning manager and then buyer of men's ties and accessories in 1986. Peter loved the job but, after the recession hit in 1989, that job disappeared.

It was only a brief period before he spotted an ad for a job at the Canadian Home Shopping Network (as it was called then), which had been recently purchased by Rogers. Peter had never actually bought anything on the TV network, and though he was concerned about the lengthy commute to the west end from his downtown Toronto home,

he was intrigued enough to apply.

CHSN hired him as a planner and he started working with what he calls a "group of really wonderful people", many of whom are still there today. Yet the job was also frustrating. In those early days, the CRTC prohibited live action in the demonstration of any products on television. They were forced to use an antiquated form of stop/action motion that made it difficult.

"We were so restricted because we couldn't really show how the product worked," Peter recalls. "That all changed in 1994 when we were finally allowed to demonstrate a product with actual movement. It was like working in

the dark, and then having the lights switched on. We've never looked back."

They were exciting times as CHSN became TSC. Peter enjoyed being on the leading edge of the change but when his partner was transferred to Tokyo, he followed his heart and moved to Japan.

It was a fascinating culture and an amazing city, he says. However, with a limited Japanese vocabulary and a longing for home, Peter returned to Toronto.

Once again he quickly secured a position with another division of Rogers in 1999. One year later, he joined the Winners/Home Sense group as a planning manager.

"I couldn't believe the size of the



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Buyer Profile: Peter Franceschini, TSC

company and their impact on the market," Peter says. "I can still remember when we hit the billion dollar mark in sales. It was a wonderful place to work, and I met some great people."

(One of those co-workers, Tim Dykeman, is now with Jascor, supplier of the Green Pan, now seen on The Shopping Channel with Mark McEwan.)

Peter was transitioning into a position as menswear buyer with Winners in 2001 when he ventured out to The Shopping Channel's new headquarters in Mississauga for a lunch with some of his old co-workers. That night, he got a call asking him if he was interested in returning.

He was, and he's never regretted the decision. Today, he is senior director of the home division, the largest at TSC, after having moved up from electronics buyer to merchandise manager for hardlines. He now oversees a team of buyers and thrives on the incredible pace of a job that never lets up.

"Once you experience what we do at TSC," he explains, "you understand. It's a great adrenaline rush because things happen very quickly. Unlike a bricks and mortar store, I can tell how many we're selling at any second."

Peter looks up at the monitor positioned on the wall across from his desk, where a toned young woman in a turquoise leotard demonstrates an exer-

"The top sellers on TSC combine a great product with an appealing on-air host and a charismatic celebrity guest."

cise tube. "The immediacy of this business is addictive," he says with a smile.

He also believes the TV shopping business has a great future. "We have grown into a viable medium for major brands to tell their story," he says.

Brands, like Cuisinart, KitchenAid and Vitamix are critical to TSC, but it wasn't always that way. And it's because of the efforts of The Shopping Channels merchants that name brand awareness has been on an upswing. The home division now accounts for one third of all TSC's sales.

"TSC wasn't seen as a viable way to tell a brand's story," he says. "So we made a significant investment in our broadcast format in order to change that perception. There was a stigma attached to what we represented, and it took a long time to nurture the relationship with vendors and convince them to give us a chance."

The bet has paid off in housewares, especially for small appliance and cook-

ware vendors who have relationships with celebrity chef who provide added impact on TV. In addition to McEwan, chefs like Emeril, Lynn Crawford and, especially, Wolfgang Puck have helped boost housewares sales amongst TSC's typical customer: a 35-year-old mom with kids who probably works outside of the home and finds shopping with TSC a great convenience.

Keeping the attention of today's fickle consumer is a fine art. The best sellers usually tell a story. They provide the perfect blend of great product, appealing on-air host and charismatic celebrity guest.

"Selling on TV is not as easy as people think," says Peter. "Wolfgang is terrific because he has such passion for every piece of kitchenware he sells. He really believes that everyone has a hidden chef inside them and they just need the right tools to coax it out. That comes across very well on the air."

After three decades in the business, Peter has learned what works and what doesn't. There are few with his level of product knowledge, and he continues to lead his buying team at the Toronto, Frankfurt and Chicago shows.

Kitchen buyer Cathy Brugnone, who has worked with Peter for over a decade, says "he really knows his stuff. He has a keen eye for new products and has a good instinct for what will do well

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Buyer Profile: Peter Franceschini, TSC

on television.” She adds that as a manager, he’s always very approachable and easy to travel with.

During his travels, Peter is always searching for items that will make the consumer’s life easier, items that can be demonstrated easily. TSC delivers a customer service advantage most other retailers can’t: live air time.

“We have an edge over bricks and mortar because they can’t tell the story like we can,” says Peter. “There are few stores that have staff who can explain why someone should pay \$600 for a blender. We can. We give Vitamix enough time on air to explain why.”

Products at TSC go through a regular rotation, with a different *‘Today’s Showstopper’* every day that will get seven or eight exposures from 20 minutes to an hour. Peter prefers that the vendor provide the on-air face for the brand for several reasons. “They are the most passionate about their show product,” he explains, “and that will come through in the demo. They also have more knowledge about the product line in general.”

Though TV broadcasting is still the main driver to get the brand message out fast, TSC has not been content to rely on a single platform. In an age of fractured retailing techniques, TSC is probably more omni-channel than anyone. They’ve had a dot.com division since 1997 and were one of the first in the country to have an e-commerce site. “Broadcast is very important but today e-commerce represents nearly half of our sales,” says Peter.

In an effort to enhance their impact even more, TSC is currently in the midst of a major ‘refresh’. They are rebranding and renovating the company’s head office and studios with new sets, new graphics and new on-air personalities.

The demographic is shifting for sure, yet more people today seem to appreciate the convenience of shopping TSC. Often, they’ll watch the broadcast and then order online.

Peter says this is an integral part of their business and they’re looking for ways to improve it all the time. They know, for example, that online con-



Wolfgang Puck has been one of the top selling guest chefs on The Shopping Channel.

sumers demand assortment and TSC must provide enough variety to keep shoppers coming back.

This is where Peter excels. He spends a lot of time with his team developing an effective merchandising strategy for every product featured. He is known for asking a lot of questions, and his long term memory is exceptional. If something didn’t work 10 years ago, he’ll remember why.

“Peter has his finger on the pulse of what consumers are looking for,” says Kippy Spergel of Spergel Group Sales, who has worked with him for close to 20 years, selling everything from electronics to cleaning products. “He has built a great team and he knows how to find that one product that will get the consumer excited. Peter really knows how to present the product properly on TSC, and how to entertain viewers.”

At TSC, it’s all about the products and how well they can be presented on the air. “I love this business and I’m passionate about the products,” Peter explains. “It makes me very happy to work

hard on a new strategy and then see the product go on the air and sell out.”

Touring trade shows is one of his favourite parts of the job. Peter says he has never gone to a show and not found something new. “Things seem to happen on a trade show floor that never happen in your office,” he says.

Of course, when you’re sourcing kitchen products, it helps if you’re a gourmet chef, as Peter is (he is known for his homemade tomato sauce). When he travels, he’s always visiting local kitchen shops to see what’s new, and how it’s presented. In fact, if he hadn’t gone into retail, he would have probably gone to culinary school. But the fact is, Peter Franceschini can’t really imagine doing anything else. With The Shopping Channel now a priority brand for Rogers, there is a greater interest in investing in the division. The relaunch and studio renovations are just the beginning, and Peter is confident that ten years from now, he will still be at TSC, looking for that next great product, and loving what he does for a living. ☺



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Creating a stir

While working for Patrick Plunkett, Laura Bilechuk developed a love for kitchenware retailing. It was only natural for her to take over the store when he retired, but she wanted to do it her way.

by Denise Gaze



By definition, the word 'stir' means to move a liquid or substance around in order to mix it thoroughly. For Laura Bilechuk, 'Stir' was the name she had in mind for the kitchen store that she dreamed of owning one day. That fateful day arrived in 2011, when Patrick Plunkett, owner of Le Chef Complet in Burlington, Ontario, and her boss, decided to retire.

Laura had worked for Patrick for five years. She knew the time was right and this was her big chance to run her own

shop. She didn't hesitate to take over the reins, immediately changing the name to Stir, complete with a new logo created by her web designer.

Laura credits Plunkett with igniting her passion for all things kitchen. "I had a great relationship with Patrick. He was a trained chef and a wonderful teacher. When I first started working for him, I didn't know anything about knives so I would stand right beside him and ask questions. I was like a sponge trying to absorb everything."

Born in Hamilton, Ontario, Laura grew up in Burlington, just 20 minutes away. Though she moved several times, she always found her way back.

"I knew I would run my own business one day. It has always been a passion of mine," she says. "My grandfather owned a general store in Hamilton and he was well respected in the community so I think retailing is in my blood."

Laura began her career in customer service at the age of 15 working in the kitchen of a yacht club preparing and serving light lunches and snacks. After graduating from college, Laura worked as a travel agent. Over time, she developed a variety of skills including business management, customer service, sales, budgeting, merchandising and marketing. "I took that information," Laura says, "and applied it to my own business. But I am still learning."

Using that experience, Laura's first move was to streamline the store and give it a less cluttered look. She also expanded the original cooking school at the back of the store.

Though it was a struggle to get the shop up and running after Le Chef Complet had been closed for three months, Laura was able to pull it off. Stir opened on Mother's Day, 2011.

Today, this cozy, colourful kitchen store is right at home on trendy Brant Street. Located just steps from Lake Ontario, Stir fits in perfectly with the other high-end shops and restaurants in the city's downtown core, where it enjoys plenty of walk-by traffic.

When you enter Stir, the rustic brick walls and warm honey-coloured hardwood floors really stand out. Against that back drop, the coloured co-ordinated kitchen gadgets really pop.

With a brighter look and more new products in the 1,600 square-foot space, it wasn't long before Laura won back most of Plunkett's former customers. "There was so much loyalty from his previous customers," she says.

A hands-on operator. Laura oversees all facets of the business from buying and merchandising to co-ordination of the cooking class program.

"The business is much more challenging today," says Laura. "I need to stay on top of trends and change our product mix according to our customer's needs while still being cost effective. As a small store, we don't have any signifi-



Laura Bilechuk, left, had always known she would call her kitchen shop 'Stir'.

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Specialty Retailer Profile



cant buying power so we are always looking for value.”

Laura adds “I love being at the store but even when I am not physically here, I am still thinking about it.”

She admits it has been a bit quiet lately, but when you consider Ontario has had one of the worst winters in history, that’s not too surprising.

Seasonal fluctuations are typical for most store owners. “In retail you have to be quick,” Laura explains. “Even now I am thinking about what I can bring into the shop to attract new customers and keep those customers coming back. That is always part of the challenge.”

For those products that don’t sell, Stir has a 50% off bargain rack that is familiar to many customers. Laura is quick to mark items down in order to move them out the door.

An avid user of Facebook and Twitter, Laura feels social media is a very cost-effective way to advertise.

“I’ll tweet something and a customer will respond immediately,” she says, but she admits it’s a struggle figuring out how to best spend her advertising dollars.

The 1,600-square-foot store is located on trendy Brant Street in Burlington, Ontario. Cookware is a perennial best seller.

“I’m competing with national chains and big box stores so we carry upscale bakeware from France as well as bakeware from China,” Laura explains. “We have a lot of seniors who may not want an All-Clad pan that’s going to last a lifetime.”

With two massive shopping malls close by, Laura knows one of her main roles is that of educator. It’s also what gives her a competitive edge. When customers come in with a flyer from a national chain with a product at a lower price point, she’ll advise them to make sure they’re comparing apples to apples. “Sometimes we are offering a seven-year warranty while our competitor offers five years,” she explains.

Laura works hard to stay on top of the current trends. She is constantly sourcing new suppliers online or visiting similar retailers in the area to get ideas. Cookware, knives, bakeware and linens are currently the top selling categories at the store. In 2013 she started carrying more home décor items. “I’m still learning that what I like isn’t always what the customer will like,” she says.

A good relationship with her suppliers is important to Laura. She credits them with keeping her in the forefront of what is happening in the industry. Mary Pat Salvian of Canfloyd says “Laura is a great retailer who has a lot of knowledge about the products she carries in her store.”

While Laura says she “has no trouble turning down a product if I feel it’s not the right fit”, she does rely on the vendor’s expertise and will reach out to them for assistance when needed.

Harvey Geiger at Wüsthof says: “If I’m in the area, it’s very refreshing to be able to drop in and see Laura without a specific appointment. If she’s not busy, she’ll take the time to discuss business. She’s very professional and is always concerned that the credit for any sales from the vendors I represent is given to me. I appreciate her concern.”

Able to anticipate her customer’s needs and deliver exceptional service, Laura is also committed to the success and happiness of her employees. Stir employs five part-time staff and Laura



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Specialty Retailer Profile



feels fortunate to have found great women who all share a true passion for cooking and entertaining.

"This helps build strong relationships with our customers," she explains.

Each employee goes through an extensive training period. Laura wants her staff to be comfortable with the features of each product and to feel confident they are able to sell it.

Creating a buzz around her business is something Laura takes seriously. She promotes the shop on Stir's website, through a weekly newsletter, in local print media and through Burlington's BIA as well as on social media. Since Stir is on the main street, window displays are changed frequently and seasonal products are put front and centre.

One of the focal points of Stir is the

kitchen area located at the back of the store. It offers demonstrations and hands-on cooking classes. A demonstration class takes place every Thursday evening with up to 16 students. The cooking class is held on Saturdays and limited to 10 students. Laura participates in all the classes and enjoys mingling with her customers.

Laura searches for chefs for the school at local restaurants and on the internet. She believes in promoting her neighbors. Stir also offers private classes for special functions. Recently Laura added knife sharpening lessons, which she handles herself.

Laura clearly loves what she does now that her retail dream has come true. "I enjoy the fact that no two days are the same," she says. "Some days I wear my

Rustic brick walls and honey-coloured hardwood flooring offset neon gadgets. Stir lets customers bottle a variety of fine Italian olive oils from Tuscany, above.

marketing hat, another day I'm creating a store displays or I might work on the floor, interacting with my customers."

One important retail lesson Laura has learned is that 'you can't be everything to everyone.'

"Fear of failure may make you want to go in a different direction but you need to stay true to your business model, she explains.

There are times when a customer will ask Laura to bring in a certain item. Though she knows that doesn't necessarily mean it will sell, she's willing to take that risk on occasion.

When Laura has a chance to take time away from the shop, she enjoys cooking or spending time outdoors hiking, camping and fishing. She also believes strongly in giving back to community that supports her through monetary and product donations.

With a combination of determination, luck, and being in the right place at the right time, Laura's dream has become a reality. Thanks to some retail DNA from her grandfather, Laura Bilechuk is doing exactly what she has always wanted to do – cause a Stir in the heart of Burlington. ☺

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An Overview of the Canadian Market by The NPD Group

Continuing the trend over the past four years, the small kitchen appliance industry in Canada once again experienced strong revenue growth in 2013 relative to most industries tracked by The NPD Group. The industry generated \$665 million which is a growth of 6% over 2012. (This figure covers small kitchen electrics only and does not include floorcare, personal care or home comfort appliances.) Unit sales grew 2% to over 13 million which is on average one kitchen appliance purchased for every household in Canada.

The most vivid trend observed over the past 12 months was the shift toward appliances that help people achieve a healthier lifestyle. Juicers, countertop blenders and healthy fryers outpaced all other product categories in terms of revenue growth compared to the previous 12 months. Juicers experienced the highest growth at +165% while generating \$26 million in revenue. In fact, juicers earned as much revenue in Q4 of 2013 as they did in all of 2012. Although centrifugal or "fast" juicers represent the vast majority of juicer sales in Canada, masticating or "slow" juicers seem to be gaining traction as the segment grew from 6% share in 2012 to 14% share in 2013.

Countertop blenders also outpaced most other product categories with revenue growth of 48% in 2013. Brands and products which specifically promoted the health benefits of using their products experienced the highest growth. In addition we saw a greater focus on high powered blenders which claim to "pulverize" anything in their path. Brands that positioned themselves as offering high power at a value price point saw the largest share gain.

Although food processors as a whole grew revenues by 50% in 2013, the growth was driven almost exclusively by blender-type processors which are primarily used to make juices and smoothies. Choppers also experienced double digit revenue growth as colourful, innovative products which make chopping and grading easier than in the past entered the Canadian market.



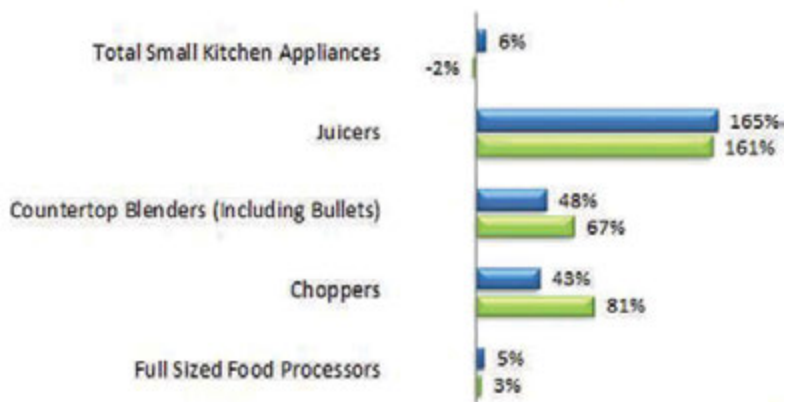
Bamix celebrates its 60th anniversary this year with a special edition 8-piece blender set. The stylish new Swissline Bamix Anniversary Edition, available in black or white from Browne, features a 150Watt heavy-duty AC motor, two-speed safety switch with soft grip and two-fold insulation. In addition to the multi-purpose whisk and beater blades, plus 1000ml polyjug (that is BPA-free), the special unit comes with a Swissline anniversary counter stand.



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Motor-driven mix

The Tritan Jar Blender from **Hamilton Beach**, below, offers 700 watts of peak power and a 48-ounce copolyester jar. The stir stick function can stir ingredients through the lid while blending, eliminating the need to stop and stir. It's ideal for icy drinks, purees, salsas and chopped fruits.



This new 6-speed hand mixer from Hamilton Beach has a new Pulse function to reduce splatter and for easier ingredient incorporation. It has a 290-watt motor, a separate ejector button and comes with a handy snap-on storage case for attachments. Shown above, the new mixer has a door to easily store attachments after the mixer has been put away. The sleek design includes stylish brushed metal accents.



The 12-cup Stack & Snap food processor from Hamilton Beach, below, is easy to assemble and use. The 12-cup sealed bowl with pour spouts is designed to prevent leaks. The Big Mouth feed tube reduces pre-cutting while the powerful 450-watt motor handles any food prep task. It comes with a stainless steel chopping blade and reversible slicing/shredding disc.

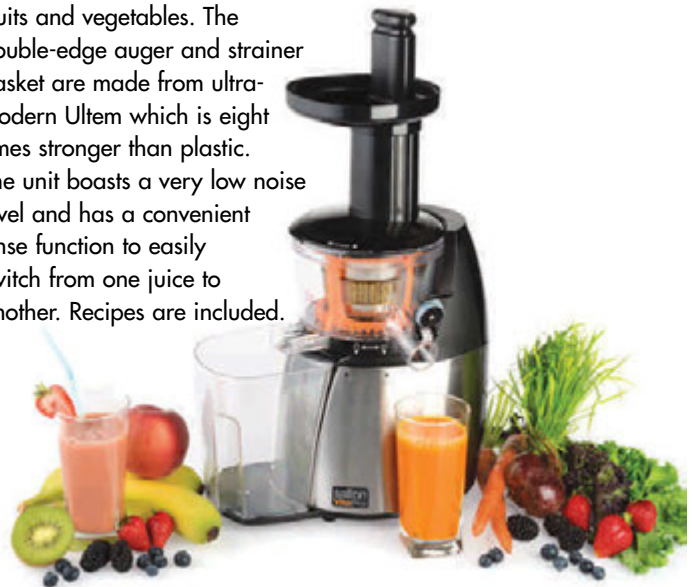


This attractive stand mixer from **Salton** has a unique foldable construction that folds down to 50% of its height to save space. It features six mixing speeds and a mixer head that tilts and locks securely for easy removal of beaters and mix-



ing bowl. The storage cover keeps the mixer clean while not in use.

Also new from Salton (and featured on our cover) is the VitaPro low speed juicer and smoothie maker. It uses superior cold press technology to provide higher output by thoroughly squeezing all the juice from fruits and vegetables. The double-edge auger and strainer basket are made from ultra-modern Ultem which is eight times stronger than plastic. The unit boasts a very low noise level and has a convenient rinse function to easily switch from one juice to another. Recipes are included.



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Motor-driven mix



The new **Oster** Juice & Blend 2-Go Juice Extractor and Personal Blender, above left, boasts 400 watts of power to extract all the nutrients from fruits and vegetables with a compact design for countertop space-saving. Consumers can prepare juices or smoothies right in the 20-ounce, BPA-free personal jar. All parts are removable and dishwasher safe. This spring **FoodSaver** will be launching the 2-in-1 fully automatic vacuum sealing system. The new unit, above, conveniently combines both heat-seal and handheld vacuuming capabilities in one unit. Rounding out Jarden's new line up is the Oster Versa brand collection of high performance blenders, left. The new 1400 series of blenders are rugged and durable with massive 1,400-watt motors that spin their stainless steel blades at 28,000 RPM to deliver precise and professional results at the touch of a button. The Versa 1100 Series will feature a healthy blend of power, precision and value. Accessories include a 5-cup food processor, smaller jar and Blend 'N Go cup.



The **Vitamix** 750 represents the new generation in blending – or 'liquidizing'. Powerful and versatile, the Professional series offers five pre-programmed settings for smoothies, frozen desserts, hot soups, puree and a cleaning cycle to make blending easier than ever. With a powerful 2.2 peak horsepower motor, the blender can generate blade speeds up to 434 km/h. The compact design will fit under most kitchen cabinets. The base is equipped with an easy-to-clean, brushed stainless finish. The low-profile, 64-ounce BPA-free container features a steel blade and a wider base for faster, finer blending. It also has an improved pour spout.



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Motor-driven mix



The Bellini Kitchen Master from CedarLane Culinary, does it all: chopping, blending, kneading, whipping, mixing, frying, steaming and boiling. It includes a base unit, mixing bowl, chopping/stirring/butterfly blade, three steamer baskets, spatula and a digital scale, below.



The new Kenwood Blend-X blender has wide-ranging abilities from blending hot soup to crushing ice. It features a die-cast metal control panel, a Thermoresist glass container for both hot and cold use, and stainless steel blades. The patented blade technology uses a tiered blade system that vertically shifts the position of the blades into the goblet to allow for better coverage within the blending area, creating two distinct chopping zones where the blade angles and spacing are critical to the performance. It also features six pre-set functions and a 1.6 litre Thermoresist glass jar.



This new Cuisinart Juice Extractor offers 1000 Watts of power and a 5-speed control dial for maximum extraction. This powerful yet quiet appliance can handle both soft and hard fruits and vegetables with ease. With a large 3-inch feed tube, a 2-litre pulp container and a 1-litre juice container, capacity is never a concern. The adjustable pour spout and locking hinged lid eliminate drips and spills for clean countertops. A specially designed filter basket reduces foam while increasing juice output. An exclusive foam management filter disk allows users to choose the amount of foam in your juice.



KitchenAid's new line-up of Diamond 5-speed blenders is available in a rainbow of contemporary colours. Each blender has an exclusive diamond blending system with a 5-speed motor equipped with Intelli-Speed motor control. Other features include a patented stainless steel blade, Soft Start feature and five Pulse Mode speeds. There is also an Auto Start function and Crush Ice mode. The blender boasts a 60-ounce BPA-free diamond-shaped pitcher design (that's safe for the dishwasher) has a stay-put lid and sits on a die cast metal base. The control panel with white LED lights is easy to clean.

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Motor-driven mix



The Cool Kitchen electric meat grinder from **Only Cuisine** has a 575-Watt motor that is quick and efficient. With elegant, streamlined white housing, it has a reverse function and comes with two stainless steel discs, pusher, sausage filler and kebab accessories. Also from Orly Cuisine, the electric Pasta Factory by Strauss Allegro, right, is easy to use with a 200-Watt motor and seven pasta discs to prepare everything from gnocchi to lasagna with the simple touch of a button.



Chef's Choice will unveil a revolutionary new electric knife sharpener for ceramic and metal knives this spring. Using an advanced diamond abrasive technology, this sharpener is the first of its kind on the market. It will quickly apply an incredibly sharp and durable edge. Featuring an elegant design with three sharpening stages and precision knife guides, it will easily sharpen any kitchen, household, fish fillet or pocket knife.

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Best in Glass

A toast to new designs in drinkware and stemware



These new double-wall gel shot glasses from **Product Specialties** comes in sets of three in three colours, blue, green and orange. Each is made of double-wall acrylic with freezing gel. Simply place the gel shots upside down in the freezer for two to four hours before use. Each 1.7-ounce shot is BPA-free and the gel is non-toxic.

Forget wine tasting... beer tasting is all the rage these days. In response, Product Specialties offers a wide assortment of beer tasting sets, beer mugs, beer glasses, and a beer wheel tasting guide under its Final Touch brand. The 13-piece set shown below includes six beer tasting glasses designed to enhance the taste of six brews, six aluminum coasters with corked bottoms and the wheel tasting guide.



Libbey presents the Farm to Table collection, above left, as a reflection of the trend towards buying fresh and local with jar-style beverage glasses. The Perfect Whisky collection, above right, is a line of glassware shapes designed to enhance the flavour of brown spirits. The packaging is designed to both entice and educate. Also new from Libbey this spring is B.I.G. collection, which stands for Big Interesting Glass. Available with eye-catching packaging, this oversized assortment includes a 44-ounce martini glass, 56-ounce margarita glass, two 56-ounce brandy glasses and a 60 ounce mug.



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Best in Glass



This double wall x-large square glass from **Inter-Continental Mercantile** holds 14 ounces. It's made of two layers of borosilicate glass that are mouth blown together to create a vacuum layer of insulation.

Also new is this Pure water carafe. The integrated strainer in the lid retains ice cubes, pieces of fruit or other enhancement. It pours accurately with no drips and comes in a colour gift box.



New from Artland, this traditional, vintage-shaped beverage server is perfect for serving refreshing beverages. The rustic metal stand keeps the glass jar elevated, making it easy to fill glasses from any table or countertop. Adding to the charm of the beverage server are these embossed, rustic style drinking jars, below. The jars are designed with a curved handle for easy drinking. They're ideal for iced tea or lemonade. The durable, thick glass is tough enough for everyday use. Distributed by **DanESCO**.

The beautiful Turbulence glass is part of the **Trudeau** Bohemia collection of quality stemware. It features an original design that amplifies wine quality for better oxygenation without the need for decanting.



The Curve water glass, left, from Viva Scandinavia features distinctive curves covered in a non-stick silicone material to provide a comfortable gripping surface. The glasses offer perfect serving sophistication for water, coffee, juice and other beverages. Distributed by **Danica**.

Best in Glass



The **Ricardo** glass collection by Lehmann was created in partnership with the prestigious Winemaker Association of France and sommelier Gérard Basset. The collection includes three wine glasses suitable for red, or sparkling wine. The curves of the glass enable better restitution of wine aromas and the thinness of the rim enhances the tasting experience. The lead-free crystal has a high breakage resistance and offers excellent transparency. The line also includes a short drink tumbler, below, and a long tumbler.



The popular govino shatterproof wine glass is now available as a beer glass. Made from crystal-looking, non-leaching BPA-free polymer, the govino beer glass features the distinctive govino thumb-notch for an ergonomic grip. Distributed by **B & M Marketing**.

Spiegelau has partnered with two of the leading Stout brewers in the U.S. to create the ultimate tool for enjoying Stout beer. This glass was selected from eight, custom-made finalists. Expertly crafted, the Spiegelau Stout glass accentuates the roasted malt, rich coffee and chocolate notes that define this beer style while maintaining functional design characteristics.



Amphora Trading is debuting the Zalto line of stemware and decanters. The handmade, lead-free collection feels beautiful in the hand and enhances the wine tasting experience, yet can go right into the dishwasher. Made in Austria, the Zalto collection features nine elegant design to enhance all spirits, wines and beers. Designed for everyday use but beautiful enough for entertaining.



This year **Royal Selangor** will introduce the Prestige collection by Nachtmann. A weighty glass with a commanding presence, the glasses allows prisms of light and colour to play across the symmetrical cuts in the contemporary pattern.

Store & Contain

What's new in food storage containers and canister sets



Trudeau recently won a Sustainable Development award in the industrial design category during Montreal's prestigious Grand prix du design competition with the Fuel collection. The eco-design logic of the one-piece sandwich box, above, impressed the judges. The lunch bags and lunch totes, left, are made from easy-clean materials. They're offered in a tote with an adjustable strap or in an iconic brown bag shape. The Fuel range also includes squeezable sports bottles with wide-mouth openings.

There are no more messy lunch boxes thanks to the Vacu Vin Lunch Locker from **International Innovation**. It's great for carrying food or drinks as the support bands keep sandwiches, rolls or fillings in place. The base can be used as a plate and the bands can be removed after use for easy cleaning.



The BIA Cordon Bleu line of kitchen canisters from **DanESCO** offers clean lines and contemporary colours. Each container is identified with one side in English and the other in French. They're made of durable stoneware combined with a bamboo lid. Airtight silicone gaskets keep food fresh. Sold separately.

The stylish FoodStore and SpiceStore units by Joseph Joseph include individual glass jars of various sizes that all stack neatly together on their own rotating carousels. Made from borosilicate glass, the jars have airtight lids. Each carousel has a non-slip base and rotating mechanism to make

every jar easily accessible. Both sets fit nicely on any countertop.



The OXO steel POP containers, above, will enhance any kitchen decor. They feature an air-tight seal engaged by a simple push of the unique pop-up button mechanism. Another push of the button opens the lid. The buttons serve as a handle for easy access to the contents.





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Store & Contain



Available from **Port-Style Enterprises**, Sistema is a new range of food storage items designed for today's active, healthy lifestyle. Sistema BPA-free products are easy to clean and easy to use. New items for 2014 include a picnic-size salt and pepper set, (each with a lid to prevent spillage), and a 'yogurt-to-go' container, left, available in both a single serve size or as a set of two, with a new screw top lid. Also new is a three-pack breakfast and lunch set, above, consisting of an oatmeal-to-go bowl, a soup mug and a noodle cup. It's ideal for students.



Fresh, vibrant lid colour schemes highlight the newest storage collection from **Anchor Hocking**. There are two colour palettes available: lime/mint/teal/blueberry and pineapple, mango, grapefruit and eggplant. Available from Everywhere, each size dish has a different colour lid and repeats for the round dishes and rectangular dishes. The glass is made in the U.S. and it's safe for the oven, refrigerator, microwave, freezer and dishwasher. The round and rectangular shapes each come in four sizes.



Mebel GioStyle containers from **Canitra Agents** are designed and manufactured in Italy. There are two colour stories: High Tech (ice, black, white) and Energia (orange, yellow and red). The storage containers (shown) come in cylinder and rectangular shapes with rubber gaskets to ensure tight fitting lids. Available in three sizes and six colours, the GioStyle range is attractively priced and includes everything from a funky sink mat to a napkin holder complete with Italian napkins!



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Cooking with kids

COUNSELTRON will launch a new variety of houseware items this year by Metaltex. The new safety knife, below, is great for kids. This knife is not only safe for kids to cut their lettuce, it's also a fun tool for baking and cutting brownies.



These cutting boards are specially designed for children. Available from **Jascor Housewares**, they make kids' meals easy with prep and serve options all in one. A fun way to engage children in the cooking process, they are made of BPA-free plastic in the U.S. and are available in two colour combinations (shown below).



Danisco will debut new mini apron sets from Mü Kitchen. The 3-piece sets are available in two patterns and include an adjustable apron, chef hat and oven mitt. Made of 100% durable cotton.



Anchor Hocking offers two Mommy & Me baking sets for pies or cakes, above. This mini bake set includes durable cake pans, mixing bowl, measuring cup and 6-ounce storage bowl with lid.

This new children's flatware set from **Paderno** is made of solid 18/10 stainless steel and is packaged in a fun, decorative box. This durable set is engraved with an adorable duck theme at the bottom of each handle.



The Dumpling Cube from **Danica** is made of 100% food-safe recyclable plastic. It can create four dumplings at a time for turnovers or samosas and folds into a neat cube for storage.



Port-Style is introducing Oogaa, an innovative line of sustainable products for babies and young children. The train (or plane)

spoon, above, is made of 100% silicone which is safe, unbreakable and soft on baby's gums. It comes in three colours. The high quality meal time set, far left, includes two spoons and a bowl and is safe for the dishwasher, microwave, freezer and oven.

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The Monday Night Reception falls on St. Patrick's Day this year, and that means, for one night everyone is an honorary Irishman! All U.S. and international buyers and news media are invited to finish their day at the show and join in the fun of a Chicago Style St. Patrick's Day pub party. Guests can toast the "luck of the Irish" with cocktails and hors d'oeuvres, while enjoying the music of a live band and pub games. The Reception is hosted by the International Business Council (formerly HECNA), a group of IHA members actively engaged in international business. The reception will be held from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., in the South Building, Level 4, Room S406A, Vista Ballroom.

With more than 2,000 exhibitors, 30% of whom come from outside the U.S., the 2014 edition of the International Home + Housewares Show will have a greater global reach than ever before. There are 400 brand new exhibitors this year, with organized pavilions from over 30 countries, as well as a wide range of special attractions, displays and, of course, celebrity chefs in the Cooking Theatre.

In addition to the exhibits (divided into four distinct product categories), the show offers first-class educational and networking opportunities for both specialty retailers and corporate buyers. Retailers can gain insight into the latest trends, designs, visual merchandising, sustainability, retail success factors and consumer preferences.

The educational offerings include:

New Harmonies: Changing Themes in Color/Design Trends

Monday, 17th, 12 Noon

Room S100/Grand Ballroom, Level 1

Join Leatrice Eiseman, IHA's colour ex-

pert and executive director of the Pantone Color Institute, in an engaging, highly visual program that demonstrates the strongest trends in colour and styling families.

Top Trends 2015

Monday, 17th 7:30 am

Room S100/Grand Ballroom, Level 1

Tom Mirabile, IHA's trend forecaster and senior vice president of Global Trend & Design at Lifetime Brands will present his annual overview.

Engaging the Consumer: Facts vs. Fiction in Lifestyle and Color

Tuesday, 18th, 12 Noon

Room S100/Grand Ballroom, Level 1

New realities at work and home have altered not only consumers' lifestyles but their opinions as well. Although some of the previously believed concepts about colour, style and even consumer behaviors have been transformed and re-evaluated, it is still important to know what is factual information about colour and Tom Mirabile and Leatrice Eiseman, au-



The Housewares Charity Foundation will honour three industry veterans at its gala dinner on March 17th. **David Ortiz**, vice president & divisional merchandise manager for cooking/dining at Wal-Mart, will be named 2014 Lifetime Humanitarian; **Janis Johnson**, president of Gourmet Catalog & Buying Group, will be named Specialty Retailer Humanitarian; and **Wolfgang Wüsthof**, senior partner, Wüsthof, will be Humanitarian of the Year. Proceeds will benefit The Breast Cancer Research Foundation and The Chicago Initiative on Pancreatic Cancer at the University of Chicago.



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thor of nine books on colour, will join forces to shed a new light on the changing realities of today's consumer and the essential role of color in both serving and connecting with them.

Creating the Store's Brand Identity

Monday, 17th, 2:30 pm

Innovation Theater

Room 350, Lakeside Center

Just as manufacturers spend millions creating easily recognized and long remembered logos and brands, so must today's retailer create his own brand identity. Martin M. Pegler, together with the other *gia* Expert Jurors, will discuss branding and creating brand identity in retail spaces, including examples from past and current *gia* winning stores.

Free Specialty Retailer Sessions

Sponsored by the International Housewares Association, specialty retailers can benefit from free consulting with retail experts, covering topics from mobile and online sales to window displays and social media strategies.

The topics to be covered include:

- **Moving Into and Profiting from Mobile Sales:** Learn about the new technology trends in the fast approaching mobile retail world. Leave with actionable items that you can implement immediately.
- **Profiting From Cyberspace:** Do you

have the right technical equipment, systems and platforms to keep up with the fast paced challenging world of mobile, video and social? Want to know the best way to make it economical and work?

Great ideas need great plans, and that is what you will take away and bring back to your store from this session.

- **Better Business Planning Means Better Profits:** Bring your concerns and questions plus paperwork for a confidential and highly valuable meeting.
- **Customer Based Experience Brings in the Profits:** Kick start your branding from mobile to meme, while engaging all customers and employees.
- **Making the Social World Profitable:** Learn how to encompass the social world in your business.
- **Human Resources That Benefit the Owner and the Employee:** Do you have trouble recruiting and training your staff?
- **Windows Can Be Great Sales People:** Design is not just pretty displays. Visual Design, from windows to shelves always tells a story, and in that story, keeps your brand in the customers mind.

To sign up for the sessions, visit: www.housewares.org/show/attend/spret_cons.aspx

GIA pays tribute to world's best retailers

Twenty-three outstanding retailers from 22 countries will be honoured in the *gia* program this year. The IHA and International Home + Housewares Show created the *gia* program in 1999 to foster innovation and excellence in home and housewares retailing throughout the world. At a gala dinner held on March 16, the global *gia* jury, consisting of four experts from Asia, Europe and the Americas, plus a rotating group of co-sponsoring trade publication editors, will select five global honourees and the winner of the Martin M. Pegler Award for Excellence in Visual Merchandising.

The 2013/14 national *gia* winners are:

- Cook Inc. - Argentina
- The SuperCool - Australia
- K & Ö HOME - Austria
- Palata Casa - Brazil
- Teatro Verde Cucina - Canada
- Oben Muebles - Colombia
- LERCHE design - Denmark
- Paragourmet - Dominion Republic
- Potten & Pannen Stanek - Eastern Europe
- Merci - France
- Estella KochLust - Germany
- HomeStop - India
- Galleria Fiaba - Italy
- 12K - Japan
- Kookwinkel Bianca Bonte - Netherlands
- Villeroy&Boch - Poland
- Dom Farfora - Russia
- Pro Table St. Gallen - Switzerland
- Boyner - Turkey
- Lakeland - U.K.
- Motociclo - Uruguay
- Rolling Pin Kitchen Emporium - U.S.
- MetroKitchen.com - U.S. Internet

Other *gia* highlights include a special showcase in the Hall of Global Innovation where visuals of the award-winning stores are on display. Banners for the retailers can be seen in the walkway that connects the Grand Concourse and the Lakeside Center.

Representing retailing excellence around the world, *gia* is part of a larger education initiative that includes seminars by retail experts, columns in international housewares publications and events in sponsors' home countries.

Visitors to the International Home + Housewares Show will enjoy an expanded array of social media access this March. From live Twitter feeds to Facebook postings and the IHA blog, attendees can stay up-to-date on events and the newest products even if they don't stay all four days. Planning a visit to the show before arriving in Chicago is easy with Housewares Connect 365 and the Show's mobile app. At the Show, attendees and exhibitors can visit Social Media Central and the Digital Commerce Solutions Pavilion to meet with experts in social media and digital commerce.

Housewares Connect 365 is the year-round search tool at www.housewares.org/housewaresconnect365 where users can search for exhibitors, products, show-related events, displays, the Cooking Theater schedule and educational presentations. Users can save their searches to a personal "briefcase" and communicate with exhibitors before, during and after the Show. Each exhibitor listing includes videos, news releases, product listings, photos and catalogs, company contacts and a company "bio."



While at the Show, attendees can access their Housewares Connect 365 briefcase at HC 365 kiosks/email stations located in all three buildings and in the Buyers Clubs.

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Chicago Product Preview



The new Chef'sChoice PetitePie maker quickly bakes four delicious individual size pies that can be filled with a variety of sweet or savory fillings. The deep-pocketed, non-stick and easy release pie plates are 4" in diameter and ideal for making perfectly sized pastries with savory stuffing or sweet fillings. It also features a precise digital timer and "Ready" beeper.



With an advanced Taste/Texture Select feature, the Chef's Choice WafflePro delivers the ultimate waffle every time. A precise temperature control provides consistent even baking. The floating hinge design and latching lid handle ensures uniform waffle thickness.

Visit Chef's Choice at Booth L11908



Cool Gear's new Arise cap, left, opens quickly and easily with the touch of a button. The button releases a sanitary cover that keeps the silicone sipper germ-free. Shown right, Cool Gear's new double wall smoothie bottles come in two sizes. The wide mouth straw is designed with a special agitator to remix beverages easily.

Visit Cool Gear at Booth S1877

The Impresso Z9 One Touch TFT is setting new standards in specialty coffee making. Shown below, it offers user-friendly operation and a captivating design. It's made to exacting Swiss standards of precision. Once the desired option has been selected on the high-resolution TFT colour display, the machine silently sets about preparing an espresso, coffee, latte macchiato, cappuccino or other speciality beverage. The cup illumination feature ensures that the final result is always presented in the best possible light.

Visit Jura Capresso at Booth L11102



The new Zwilling J.A. Henckels four-piece Steakhouse knife set, above, features large steakhouse-style palisander wooden handles that are comfortable to hold and aesthetically pleasing. The generous-sized blade with an inverted, scalloped edge stays sharper longer for enhanced cutting performance. The set includes a beautiful bamboo box for safe storage and for gift giving.

Visit Zwilling at Booth N6338



Cookina is a new alternative to aluminum foil, wax paper or parchment paper. Reusable and reversible, it's ideal for grilling or barbecuing. It can also be used as a baking sheet to extend the life of the pan or to keep the bottom of the oven clean. They hold no flavours or odor from previous uses. It's easy to clean and can be cut to fit any size pan. **Visit Cookina at Booth S4122**





The Final Touch Kool Twister keeps white wine chilled for up to one hour and will cool down red wines in 15 minutes. Reusable, the twister is made from a non-toxic gel and features a no-spill pour-through spout. To use, simply freezer for a couple of hours, insert into the wine bottle and secure the rubber seal. It can then be poured straight from the bottle. It also comes with a wine stopper.



This Professional cocktail shaker is made of commercial grade, 22 gauge stainless steel for higher corrosion-resistance and strength. The lid seals inside the shaker cup to prevent drips. The built-in strainer allows for easy pouring. **Visit Product Specialties, Booth S4047**

Delivering an authentic Italian espresso experience, the Dedica offers elegant stainless steel construction and a strikingly slim, six-inch footprint. The Dedica includes filters for a single or double shot of espresso, and can also accept E.S.E. pods. Other features include thermoblock technology, auto flow stop, cup warmer and manual cappuccino system.

Visit DeLonghi at Booth N9505



DeLonghi's new Pinguino Whisper Cool portable air conditioner provides up to a 50% reduction in sound power, making it one of the quietest on the market. The PAC incorporates Real Feel technology for simultaneous control of both temperature and humidity. It also features a BioSilver air filtration system.

Visit DeLonghi at Booth 11321

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Chicago Product Preview



Architec will introduce a variety of new items at the show. Distributed in Canada by Jascor Housewares, the new items include a concave wood cutting board, above, that is designed to hold juices in place. It's also available in a pro gripper version in polypropylene. The double-edge Swipe wiper, below, has a rubber tip for squeegee action to

easily wipe away water or crumbs. Also new is a line of kitchen tools made with a revolutionary material that resembles natural cork yet maintains a high heat resistance, below.

Visit Architec at Booth S1417 or Jascor at Booth S819



Chickadee is the name of Danica's new pattern for fall 2014. It features cheerful chickadees perched on snowy branches with long gray tail feathers. The subtle gold breast of the bird brings a welcome warmth to winter. The entire Chickadee collection includes kitchen aprons, tabletop, linens and ceramics.



Canadian distributor COUNSELTRON will add several new items to their Vigar line this year. Both fashionable and unique, the items make housework or office work more enjoyable. The new haute couture dolls are multi-purpose brushes made with nylon bristles. Each brush is individually packed in a gift box and comes with a dress that functions as a brush holder too.

Visit Casa Vigar at Booth S3672

The new KitchenAid 1.7-litre electric kettle offers variable temperature settings, digital temperature display and a 30-minute HOLD temperature feature. The streamlined design has a lid-release button and soft grip handle with clear water window.

Visit KitchenAid at Booth L13102



Ecologie colanders and nesting batter bowls are environmentally sustainable and naturally biodegradable. Each beautiful, reusable Ecologie component is made from food-safe material consisting of crushed bamboo and rice husks. With bright, cheerful colours, each piece is a welcome addition to your kitchen and table.



Chicago Product Preview



This March Rowenta will introduce the Silence Force: a complete line of French-designed floor care products. Following more than 15 years of acoustic research, this range has unrivaled decibel levels, making them up to four times quieter than the average vacuum, without compromising on performance. The Silence Force Extreme Multi-Cyclonic features best-in-class silence levels and dust pick up. The triple filtration system captures 99.97% of the dust. The Rowenta Stick vacuums are the perfect blend of ergonomics and smart technology. With the ultra-slim Delta Head and Delta Vision LED Headlights, dust can't hide. They offer exceptional dust pick-up and are powered by an exclusive cyclonic dust separation process. **Visit Rowenta at Booth S3601**



Trudeau will debut a new range of dripless oil and vinegar bottles and four new spice mills. The Canadian-designed bottles, above, are 100% dripless to avoid messy spills and leaks. They're made of lightweight borosilicate glass with an angled topper and large stainless steel spout. Sold separately in three colours. The new 7.5-inch mills feature a corrosion-resistant grinder and adjustable grind level. Offered in four colours: red (chili, shown); green (herbs); white (salt); and black (pepper). **Visit Trudeau at Booth S2246**

In addition to Whitford's existing lines of decorative coatings, including Xylac and FusionX, special decorative exteriors such as spatter, silk-screen, and pad-print (below) are also available for cookware, bakeware and small appliances. These effects and textures are available in almost any line of coatings.

Visit Whitford at Booth S3125



New Confetti Modular Trays from Zak are sold in a set of four that includes one large, two small, and one medium-sized tray. The trays can be used separately for appetizers, condiments, or desserts, but are also designed to fit inside each other in a wide range of configurations for fun and festive serveware options.

Visit Zak at Booth S1069



CHICAGO SHOW HOURS

Saturday

10 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Sunday to Monday

8:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Tuesday

8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Attendance at Ambiente soars



Above: Muted tones and softer botanical prints and vintage patterns could be seen on much of the tableware at Ambiente.

Below, the design Pavilion devoted to this year's trade fair partner, Japan.

Above right: The Wesco booth invited visitors to view the company's new Spacy tray.



The most successful Ambiente for more than a decade closed its doors in Frankfurt on February 11th, with a 3.5% increase in the number of visitors. Altogether, 144,000 buyers from 161 countries attended the world's leading trade fair for the consumer-goods.

Ambiente's numbers tell a very impressive story. The five-day fair featured 4,724 exhibitors from 89 countries, all of whom presented the latest innovations for the coming season in a dramatic fashion at the spacious Messe Frankfurt exhibition grounds, which span over 329,00 square metres and 11 halls.

"Ambiente has never been so important for the international sector as it is today," says Detlef Braun of Messe Frankfurt. "These results confirm our positioning of the Ambiente brand as the world's leading consumer goods trade fair. The positive economic climate in Germany and the upturn in the world economy have given the fair a substantial boost this year."

It's true the economy has much to do with the fair's success. But the real reason Frankfurt has become a favourite destination for many Canadian retailers is because the fair is absolutely gorgeous. It's the exhibits themselves that make it so. In the tabletop halls, some of the booths are so imaginative they are breathtaking. And at the end of each day, rather than rushing out of those beautiful booths, most exhibitors break out champagne and relax with their customers for another few hours. Europeans know how to do it right.

This year, Ambiente's Partner Country was Japan and the country was honoured at a special pavilion and during the exhibitor welcome gala. Next year, the Partner Country will be the U.S.

Ambiente 2015 will be held in Frankfurt February 13th to 17th. Highlights from this year's fair are presented on the following pages. – Laurie O'Halloran

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Frankfurt Fair Highlights



This egg cup set from the Keith Brymer Jones collection says it all. It's from MAKE in the U.K.

Social Scenes



Attendees were invited to a special cocktail party to present Tramontina's global marketing position on the Saturday evening of the fair. (Toni Palozzi of Canitra is shown in front left.)



Jerry Levin, CEO of Wilton U.S., left, catches up with (former CEO) Steve Fraser at the IHA party on February 7.



Trevor Kidd of Browne, left, attended his first Frankfurt IHA party with Browne's International vice president Peter Braley.

Ambiente Top Trend: Handy Gadgets



The German-made Steak Champ is designed to produce a perfect steak every time. Whether it's blue or medium rare, the thermometer will give an accurate reader while inserted in the steak during grilling. It comes with an activator, thermometer and info booklet. www.steakchamp.com



The Hackit chopper and stirrer from Brix Design, below, efficiently chops ground meat or stirs potatoes and mushrooms. It is said to decrease cooking time and is easy to clean.



What's not to like about this adorable wine dispenser from Laboul. It comes in a variety of fun colours, as well as silver and black. It comes apart in the centre and can be used for sports drinks, cocktails and juices as well as wine.



The Trend Show display area presented the latest tabletop designs in a dramatic fashion.

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Ambiente Top Trend: Back to Nature



Not only do MeroWings Forest products bear a striking resemblance to real tree trunks, logs and rocks, they are also comfortable as pieces of furniture. They are certainly an attention getter in any setting and would be perfect in a cottage setting. The seats can be converted into a side table with the help of a octagon tray. The stumps can be used horizontally or vertically. The Stone Bench, right, is available in indoor and outdoor versions.



Pink Himalayan salt found a variety of applications outside of the kitchen. Shown below, the Lotus aroma lamp from Himalaya Salt Dreams.



The Japanese influence could be seen throughout the fair. Above, this flower vase was designed by Mikiya Kobayashi who was recognized as a top Japanese design talent in 2013.

Made from natural materials and produced in Europe, Charlotte Nicolin's line is inspired by nature and she gives back a portion of all sales to support nature conservation. Shown below, her placemat entitled "Contemplation".



Ambiente Top Trend: Sophisticated shapes



The Living Georg Jensen collection included this chic, contemporary stainless pitcher inspired by Danish designer Henning Koppel.

Perfect imperfection is the only way to describe this delicate porcelain range from Serax.



Riedel unveiled a lovely range of elegant glass wine decanters and beverage ware.

Frankfurt Fair Highlights



Speed Dating gets right to the point

Speed-Dating@Ambiente 2014 offered journalists a unique opportunity to hear about eleven different and innovative products very quickly. There were three different sessions offered at the fair, including one focused on “Healthy Food and Slow Cooking” on Sunday afternoon. Each company representative has exactly three minutes to present a selected product from their current collection, with video screens provided. Following the brief presentation, there was a two-minute question and answer session before moving on to the next speaker.

The products presented ranged from food dehydrators, sous vide cookers and blenders to plastic knives, porcelain tableware and plastic water bottles. It was a fun, interactive way to give the media a reason to visit the exhibit – and it worked!

Each presenter was given three minutes to pitch their new product. Shown, left to right: Anthony Ciepiel, CEO of Vitamix; Sheila Rietscher of Kahla; and the international marketing director for KitchenAid.



The Doppler is a reusable, washable bottle and cup in one. The award-winning Dutch design proves you don't need disposable.



The Magic Grip porcelain line from Kahla now includes dinnerware. The grip on the bottom prevents slipping or sliding and won't harm delicate surfaces. Ideal for boaters or RVers.



Above: The new Eat'n'Out by Roll'eat is a lunch bag and placemat in one. The flexible, foldable and compact bag unzips to become a placemat. It's convenient to carry and easy to clean.



Left: Inspired by the Inuits of Greenland, the Gourmetmesser knife from Koziol has a handle and blade that are smoothly fused into a single piece. The oval opening is easily grasped for controlled leverage and cutting.

Toronto Gift Fair Highlights



Popular celebrity chef Ricardo was at the show on Sunday afternoon to promote several new housewares products and celebrate the launch of his new English language magazine. He's shown above with Katalin Végely of Domus.

Snow hinders traffic

The ice storms and bitter cold that crippled southern Ontario over Christmas continued into the January show season. The debut of the redesigned Toronto Gift Fair, held January 26th to 30th, was certainly hampered by weather for the first two days, with empty aisles and diminished traffic flow. Fortunately, the pace picked up by Wednesday, and many of the exhibitors who unveiled new products reported steady traffic and a good response. Several housewares companies, including Microplane, Nesco and Victorinox, made the move to an independent exhibit. But with so many kitchen shop owners choosing to attend only one show a year, it will be interesting to see how the summer edition of this Toronto fair will fare.



Harald Wüsthof, right, chairman of the renowned German knife maker, was on hand at the Toronto fair to help celebrate the company's 200th anniversary. He personally signed limited edition knives for retail customers such as Brent Bondarenko of Kitchen Therapy, above left.



Elena Faita of Dante Hardware in Montreal, left, meets with Trevor Kidd and Marie-Jose Peltier of Browne & Co.



On the opening Sunday of the fair, DanESCO's new president Brigitte Roy, centre, is shown with, left to right, Tamsyn Hodges, Fred Pritchard and Howard Goldstein of Golda's Kitchen and Sylvio Lamattina of DanESCO, far right.



Marion Burns of DanESCO, centre, with Robbin Lich, left, and Brent Bondarenko of Kitchen Therapy.

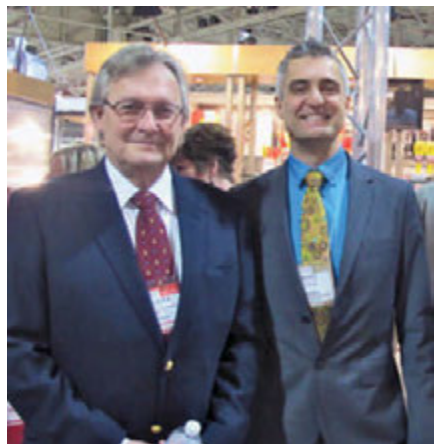


Lampe Berger was presented with the award for Best Medium Size Booth at the Toronto Gift Fair. Shown holding the award at the Congress Centre are, l-r, Pierre Cadieux, president, Lisa Wasyluk, sales rep for the GTA, Mitch Soiffer, sales manager, Elizabeth Martin, sales rep for southern Ontario and Colin MacDonald, sales rep for the Atlantic provinces.

Toronto Gift Fair Highlights



Microplane celebrated the beginning of its 20th anniversary year with a brand new exhibit in the housewares hall of the Congress Centre where visitors received a commemorative rasp grater. The Microplane team included, left to right, Andrea Coffman, Tracy Panase, Micah Jensen, Tami Pfeifer, Joel Arivett and their Quebec sales agents Evelyne and George Winkler.



Jacques Dubuc of Trudeau, left, catches up with retailer Mario Brochu, the owner of Cuisina in Quebec City. (Mario's new store was featured in our January issue.)



Ruby Renard, left, and Darlene Schmitz of Metal Ware Corporation were cooking up a storm at the Nesco exhibit. Using the Nesco roaster and the Jet Stream convection oven, they prepared everything from stuffed mushrooms to a 20-pound roast turkey.



At the redesigned COUNSELTRON booth, Jerry Cayne of Cayne's Housewares, second from left, was spotted with Jennifer Schachter, left, Brian Schachter and Mark Snitzer, right.



CY Wong shows off the latest cookware introductions from Sophie Conran at the Portmeirion/Royal Selangor exhibit in Hall 9.

Ad Index

B & M Marketing	26
Browne & Co.	23
Breville	47
Caffitaly	41
Canada Night	54
CedarLane Culinary	37
Chef's Choice	24
Counseltron	13
Cuisinart Canada	49
DanESCO	19, 57
DeLonghi	53
Faema	55, IBC
Fox Run	16
Gourmet Buzz	71
Groupe SEB	15, 64, OBC
Hamilton Beach	51
Hoover (TTI)	67
International Innovation	6
Jarden Consumer Solutions	27, 69
Jascor Housewares	35
Le Creuset	43
MDC Housewares	20
Metal Ware Corporation	61
NY NOW	75
Nordic Ware	8
Orly Cuisine	17, 63, IFC
Paderno	9
Portmeirion/Royal Selangor	5
Product Specialties	10
Ricardo	29
Salton/Toastess	7
Saeco	31
Today's Bride	77
Trudeau	11
United Sales & Marketing	25
Wüsthof	39
Zwilling J.A. Henckels	45

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Steven Beekman

National Account Manager, Breville Canada



Any recent university graduate who cannot find a job anywhere would surely envy the ease with which Steven Beekman has been able to secure one fantastic sales position after another. But right from the day he graduated, managers have recognized his talent and as a result, Steven has represented some of the most prestigious brands in the housewares industry – all while working from his beautiful home on English Bay in Vancouver, B.C.

Born and raised in Edmonton, Steven was one of six children in a busy, active household. He was a good student but really excelled in athletics, playing junior hockey and football. He graduated with a communications degree from the local college in 1986 and was immediately hired by KMS, a California-based manufacturer of professional beauty products.

Enthusiastic and dedicated, Steven started as a regional sales manager calling on beauty salons in western Canada. He really enjoyed the industry, and after just four years, was promoted to national sales manager. In 1990, he moved to Toronto to set up a Canadian head office.

Though it was a lot of responsibility for someone so young, Steve was happy to move to Ontario, where he spent the next three years calling on the KMS network of distributors. The hours were long and the exhausting seasonal sales tours “were not conducive to an active social life”, as Steven recalls. It was time for a change.

Missing his family in western Canada, Steven moved to B.C. in 1993. He hired a bilingual rep to handle sales in eastern Canada and he set up an office in Vancouver, where he was on the same time zone as the KMS American headquarters in California.

He was thrilled to be in Vancouver, but was still working far too hard. Wanting more time for himself, in 1997 he applied for and got a sales position with Atlantic Promotions, the distributor of T-fal cookware at the time. It was his first introduction to housewares, and he quickly became very comfortable in the industry. When T-fal Canada took over the brand and set up an office in Toronto, indus-

try veteran Phil Exley contacted Steven right away. They met at the Fairmont hotel and although Steven was so early that he interrupted his breakfast, Phil hired him on the spot.

“What impressed me most about the interview was Steve’s enthusiasm,” Phil remembers. “He asked me for the opportunity to represent T-fal Canada in Western Canada. I felt that anyone who asks for the position will also likely ‘ask for the order’, which is the number one quality in a good salesperson”.

Phil adds that Steven built SEB brands to a new level in Western Canada, and Steven acknowledges that, along with former Groupe SEB president Marc Turgeon, Phil was one of his main mentors and an integral part of his success.

“Both Phil and Marc were old school,” says Steven. “They knew how to establish close relationships with our customers, and they taught me how to do the same. I learned a lot about how to work with major buyers. They were both very knowledgeable and very inspiring as managers.”

Steven stayed with Group SEB for 12 lucrative years, establishing brands such as All-Clad, Krups and, of course, T-fal, with both independent retailers and chain buyers. He was happy, and wasn’t really interested in a change, but when Breville called in 2010, they made him an offer he couldn’t refuse.

At the time, Breville was being distributed by Anglo Canadian out of Montreal, and Steven was impressed with the quality and engineering behind the Australian appliance line. It was an easy transition for him because he “was used to selling high end appliances and the customers were basically the same”. That’s where the benefits of establishing loyal relationships really comes into play. He also credits Stephen Krauss, now president of Breville. “He really taught me how to take advantage of the latest technologies to further enhance my ability to service customers.”

Steven’s sales approach has always been to sit down with a customer first and do a sales analysis in order to determine their unique needs. He then creates a plan specifically suited to their operation. “Anyone can sell a product,”

he explains. “I want to sell through and move the product off the shelf, not just put it on the shelf.”

Steven knows it pays to be a good listener, and he’s recognized as such by loyal retailers such as Dave Werner, owner of Cookworks, and Mary Higgins of London Drugs.

When Breville partnered with Australian personality Joe Cross to launch a juicing craze last year, following the release of the documentary *Fat, Sick & Nearly Dead*, London Drugs was the first to jump on board. In-store appearances by Cross resulted in line-ups down the block, and sales of Breville juicers went through the roof. It was one reason Steven Beekman and Breville were honoured as LD’s vendor partner of the year in 2012. It remains one of the highlights of his career, and Mary says it was certainly well deserved.

“Steven is always very professional and organized,” says Mary. “He is always willing to fight for the customer and keeps our needs first and foremost.”

Steven calls on about 70 independent customers in B.C. as well as London Drugs, Future Shop, Best Buy and now Amazon. And starting this year, he will also take over responsibility for Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

He’s excited about the future, and though he laments the disappearance of so many small kitchen shops in recent years, he wants to stay focused on keeping his current customers ahead of the curve.

Fortunately, Steven has finally found time for that social life that was so sorely lacking in the early years. He now lives happily with Beth, his partner of eight years, works out regularly at the local gym, and recently adopted a little rescue dog, Josee. And yes, he even finds the time to prepare fresh juice every morning using his favourite Breville appliance. ☺

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