



COFFEE CHOICES IN SIOUX FALLS, S.D. SELLS UNIQUE SOAPS AND PERSONAL CARE ITEMS, SOME OF THEM SCENTED WITH COFFEE.

COFFEE YOU DON'T DRINK

CANDLES, SOAPS, LOTIONS AND OTHER NON-CONSUMABLE ITEMS MADE WITH COFFEE ESSENCES CAN BE A UNIQUE PROFIT CENTER.

BY BRENDA PORTER-ROCKWELL

Imagine sending your customer home with that rich, enticing and rewarding scent of coffee. Now imagine that transaction without a coffee cup. And skip the actual coffee, too.

Simply imagine sending your customer home with a coffee scented lotion or lip balm. According to the experts, coffee-related non-foods can be great “pick-me ups” to help differentiate your café from the others in the neighborhood, not to mention add a little more to your bottom line.

“Coffee Shop 2012” is a report from the U.S. Small Business Development Center’s National Information Clearinghouse that takes the pulse of the coffee retailing business each year. It suggests breaking away from the traditional playbook of coffeehouses like trivia nights, or that “Buy 10 drinks and get one free” loyalty program. Instead, get creative: Try adding in take-homes like coffee-scented lotions and soaps that remind customers of your house blend in a format that will last long after the coffee is gone.

“Be sure to sell coffee-related items (and track down any co-marketing opportunities),” the report says.

Mike Schiavello, owner of the Cappuccino Connection, Collingdale, Pa., a distributor of coffee and specialty beverage equipment and supplies, agreed with the report’s

recommendation, saying the upfront investment is small on these specialty items and the products don’t expire, leaving you plenty of time to sell them.

“Even if I thought adding in these candles or soaps would just get people talking about me, I would do it,” Schiavello says. “It would be worth it. You should be different. There hasn’t been anything new in this industry in a while, so why not try this?”

GIFT ITEMS

In a recent issue of the Cappuccino Connection’s newsletter, Schiavello offered nine tips for increasing business. Among them was creating specialized gift basket combinations for different celebrations—Breakfast in Bed, Afternoon Picnic, Birthday, House-warming, or any holiday. He suggested including a small selection of syrups along with coffee or tea and gourmet cookies, pancake mix, or dried fruit or candy—and maybe a coffee-scented lip balm or lotion.

“This provides your customers with great gift ideas for their friends and family, not to mention the possibility of a new, repeat customer,” Schiavello says.

Susan Reiter, owner of Coffee Choices Lite Eatery and Cafe

in Sioux Falls, S.D., said she prefers to carry only local (Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota), hand-crafted, artisan products. These include bar soaps and lotions like the Simple Soaps for Simple Folks line of organic goat milk soap made in nearby Rochester, Minn. The line includes bath and beauty products scented with essential oils, and contains similar scents as the coffees served at Coffee Choices.

"My customers responded by purchasing them immediately and giving great feedback," Reiter says. "I've been carrying and restocking her [goat milk] products for over two years now, and I have added other items with a similar story as I've come across them."

Reiter said she's found that many vendors are happy to prepare custom blends and package designs.

In fact, BodyCoffee, Oakland, Calif., which offers a line of personal care items with a coffee base, got its start selling branded, coffee-infused lip balms.

"Our very first product was a private label, pure coffee-infused lip balm for Peet's Coffee and Tea here in California. The money from that initial run helped form the basis to make the rest of our products," explained BodyCoffee President Stephanie Profitt.

KNOW THE PRODUCT

BodyCoffee, whose products use coffee as a therapeutic base for softer, smoother skin, barely smells like coffee at all. So if it's not the lingering scent of coffee that draws the customer to the product, then what?

According to Profitt, it's going to mean a barista who understands and can share with customers the other benefits of coffee.

"It's the angle that you're drinking coffee and there's coffee in your body care," she says. "There are many therapeutic benefits to having coffee in your personal care. Coffee has the same pH as our skin, it's a good astringent, it can help neutralize odors, and it's a free-radical scavenger. Also it can reduce swelling—so many cosmetic products now have caffeine in them to help reduce under-eye puffiness, for example."

While she doesn't recommend turning your coffeehouse into a spa, she says it's important to know what you're selling.

The Camano Island (Wash.) Coffee Roasters Factory Store, for example, has sold BodyCoffee lotion over the last 10 years, according to store manager Christy Santeford. The store also sells the lotions online.

"We love the fragrance...just love the way it feels. We like the way it penetrates and stays on throughout the day," Santeford says. "That's what our customers love about it. It's not a heavy coffee fragrance. It's the fragrance of the coffee flowers before they turn to a cherry, so it's a light, floral fragrance."

GETTING PERSONAL

Reiter adds that if café owners are careful with what they bring in, personally selecting each item, "You should be able to do very well with these products. They can enhance your bottom line and your customer's experience."

Reiter says she started with a 25 percent markup and as she has increased her orders, her wholesale price has gone down, allowing her to increase her markup by 5 percent, with the price point on each individual item in the \$3 to \$6 range.

As for marketing and display, Reiter takes a more hands-on approach in her shop, opting to display items in individual baskets and tins, and rearranging displays frequently for the most attractive and freshest look.

BodyCoffee offers a cardboard shipper for its lip balms that easily converts into a POS display.

Santeford's shop, which has an in-store eatery, coffee shop, butcher and consignment shop, has plenty of shelf space to store the lotions, as well as room for a tester bottle on the counter.

"It's important to have testers. A person's first reaction is it's going to smell like coffee," Profitt says. "And if people don't

want that, they should know what it smells like. They can try the product and see what it feels like. We want to have people start using it and it becomes a product they want to use for the rest of their life.”

The BodyCoffee lotion is a best-seller in the Camano Island store, followed by the lip balm and some of the soaps.

“I try not to buy a lot of the soap because we have a local artisan here on the island who does soap. So I try not to have too many things conflicting with the local artisans,” Santeford says.

Balancing local and national brands is another important part of selling coffee related non-food items.

“A lot of people—not just shop owners, but their customers, too—like the ‘local’ angle,” Schiavello says.

Schiavello says another way to make personal care products work in your store is to engage in cross-promotion. Pointing to another tip from the newsletter about swapping services with other local merchants, Schiavello suggested highlighting the local angle with shared advertising/signage of each others’ logo in the store and on websites.

SCENT ON THE RISE

If you needed another reason to differentiate your café, think about the trends for coffee non-foods in the marketplace. For years the scent and flavor of coffee has dominated “Top

LIP BALM WAS ONE OF THE EARLIEST, AND MOST SUCCESSFUL, COFFEE-BASED PERSONAL CARE ITEMS.



Trends” lists. In 2011, market research firm Mintel released its yearly trend watch list of flavors and fragrances. “Coffee Bar” remained a popular scent, and according to Mintel, “Expands coffee flavor offerings to include those also inspired by travel brochures or a happy memory from their past.”

The report goes on to state that on the personal-care side, “Coffee is also coming on strong as the featured ingredient in new product lines like Barista Bath & Body (b3).”

b3 is a line of natural beauty products that purportedly reinforces the body’s ability to repair and rejuvenate. The company says its line of coffee-based products are for both men and women, comprising performance-driven shampoos, conditioners, shower gels, body creams, bar soaps, body mists and a men’s shaving line.

In the end, selling coffee related non-foods items not only highlights the uniqueness of your store; it gives customers a chance to pick up something they didn’t know they wanted. SCR