

EDITOR'S NOTE



Reviving the Holiday Spirit

The holidays are officially over. All the baubles and lights are packed away, New Year's diet resolutions are waning, and your customers are back into their same old grinds. With the spirit of the holidays a distant memory, how can you help your customers remedy cabin fever and capture a new spirit of sorts?

I talked to a handful of retailers to help fill your "medicine cabinet" and here's what they suggested:

Supper Club Night. Anodyne @ 43rd coffeehouse, Minneapolis, sponsors a reservations-only Supper Club Night once a month during the months of January, February and March. Anodyne's most popular bands play and attendees are treated to a supper club-style dinner. The Supper Club night is wildly popular, says owner Theresa Lien, and adds, "It gives customers a reason to get out in the dead of winter."

Community Project. Anodyne @ 43rd also sponsors "The Art Rules Project," an event that brings a neighborhood together in an artistic fashion. Anodyne supplies customers with 12-inch rulers. Those customers with a creative bent decorate their rulers in whatever inspirational direction they are taken. The finished creations are sold at an auction held at the coffeehouse and the proceeds are donated to the Center for the Performing Arts, an organization that provides art education scholarships to children.

Children's Story Hour. The Riverview Café, Minneapolis, helps moms, dads and kids get out of the winter rut by holding a weekly children's story hour. The story hour is held in the playroom that owner David Bernick built especially for his smaller clientele.

Varietal Coffee Club. Kent Holloway, president of Fox Hollow Coffee, Fox Island, Wash., suggests retailers host a coffee varietal club where customers come to your store to learn about the history, unique characteristics and taste profile of a specific coffee of origin each week or month. If you're not comfortable teaching such a class, invite your roaster to play the expert role.

Brewing 101. Holloway also suggests holding in-store seminars on home-brewing and grinding techniques for a French press, espresso machine and drip brewer. He emphasizes the fact that not only do these type of classes attract customers, but also the local press. Local newspapers are most always interested in covering this type of story as a special-interest piece or just placing it in their upcoming events column.

Some other ideas you can use to draw customers in this winter are:

Hot Chocolate Wednesdays: Fill any child's cup under 12 with free hot chocolate. Invite parents to bring in their toddlers' sippy cups and fill those with complimentary hot chocolate or apple cider.

Postcards From the Edge: Ask customers to send in their winter vacation photos and encourage them to sport a piece of your logoed merchandise in the photo. Post photos in a visible spot in your store. At the end of winter, reward the customer who traveled the furthest distance with free merchandise.

Whatever events or promotions you choose to run this winter, don't forget to get more bang for your buck by getting your local press involved. For more information about inviting the press to your in-store events, visit www.specialty-coffee.com. Click on "Business Strategies" and then on "Getting Your Story Out to the Local Press."

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Please Note: Some pictures or diagrams are only available through the printed media.

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