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Gift Basket Review

Holiday to Valentine Gift Makeovers



Make the Change . . .

Gourmet foods may have six month or longer shelf life, and that makes keeping inventory steady an easier process. Cookies bought in the first week of December are still in the peak freshness by Valentine's Day. To keep expenses down, smart buyers keep a "set" inventory (items that will be carried year 'round), adding only a few pieces of seasonal merchandise to change a seasonal theme. In the designs shown above, the overwhelming majority of merchandise was selected from the "set" inventory.

Keep the Savings . . .

In this design, seasonal motif swaps transform the design from Christmas to Valentines. The poinsettia are changed to roses; a Christmas tree box of cookies becomes a Valentine box of chocolates; green ribbon disappears and white replaces it; brown shred is replaced with white. But the container and other foods are the same. Even the design shape remains unchanged, which saves a tremendous amount of time and money in labor. No need for new training hours!

Valentine Issue



2010

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Season-to-Season Savings

1. Avoid seasonal perishables.

Themed food items with a seasonal motif are the exception, but buy these sparingly – one per estimated gift basket. Giftware and containers that do not get a full sell-through can be stored until the next year.

2. Think in terms of two seasons.

When you buy Christmas gift basket components, try to plan for items that can also be sold through Valentine's Day. When new merchandise is purchased for Valentine's Day, select items that can do double duty for spring (i.e. pink roses).

3. Look for year-round containers.

A star-themed container is great for Christmas, and with a Super Star theme, can be used for Valentine's, birthdays, Mother's Day . . . virtually anything. Solid colors also work well, yet still provide tremendous versatility for adapting to any season or theme.

4. Consider crossover plush.

Snowmen won't sell on Valentine's Day, but teddy bears will. White teddy bears look great in Christmas basket themes, and cross over into Valentine's Day.



Super Star Savings

Choose a star-themed container and you might never have leftover inventory! Every component in the Christmas gift basket can be moved into Valentine's Day. Only the florals and ribbon changed.



Love the Label!

When a vendor offers season-changing labels, you gotta love that company! More gourmet gift food suppliers offer extra labels. Remove the Christmas label and apply a new Valentine tag. In this design, only the label, florals and ribbon changed from season to season.

Season-to-Season Savings, *continued*

5. Solid color gift boxes offer versatility.

With a few scrapbooking supplies or an imprinting machine, you can change gift boxes to suit your occasion.

6. Use solid ribbons with patterned or contrasting overlays. How many rolls of ribbon hang in your design studio? If you want to keep a narrow inventory to save money, cutting back on ribbon selection may be a good first step in savings. A dozen or less solid colors can be used year 'round. Accent with narrow overlays or printed seasonal motifs.

8. Be creative with after-holiday gift basket themes. Move hot cocoa, flavored coffees and teas left over from Christmas with "You Warm My Heart" themes.

9. Wrap leftover green packaging in animal print tissues and cellophane for a Valentine motif. Green packaging will translate into jungle themes. Just a touch of accent paper plus a gorilla or cheetah plush and you've got a great Wild About You theme.



Drive Sales With Personalization . . . and enjoy the savings yourself!

The designer of these gift baskets used a car as a clever ploy to change a holiday theme to a Valentine delight. Plain white boxes were imprinted with new messages. The majority of the components stayed the same from basket to basket, with motif and ribbon changes making the transition.



White Boxes Win Again

A little trim goes a long way – with a change of color and packaging. All the components are the same in these two baskets. Different label and packaging styles in the same line of merchandise makes a huge difference.

Q & A: Valentine Marketing

Q. Florists, chocolatiers, gift stores and everyone else wants those Valentine's Day sales. How do you out-market the competition?

A. "As a gift basket store, we market the holiday with the slogan, 'Gift baskets taste better than flowers and last longer too.' When roses cost \$60 and a delivery fee, why wouldn't the entire town buy from me when our gift lasts for weeks and sometimes months?"

"We simply mark the baskets up a bit to cover delivery costs, and advertise free delivery. Although it's hard to beat the grocery stores since most men shop for Valentine's Day at the very last minute, by the end of Valentine's Day last year I had nothing left to sell. I opened the store at 6 a.m. and closed at 9 p.m."

– Kristi Duhe, *The Basketry, Luling, LA*

A. "We made up two sheets with (design) menus for gift baskets and balloons with really cute names. I faxed them to all my customers about three weeks before. If you do it too far in advance, they forget.

"Also, where my husband works there are a lot of attorneys and the police station. We passed out flyers by hand. I didn't have to do anything else. We delivered (orders) in a 100-mile radius from our house."

– Bridget Garcia, *A Pink Banana, Palmdale, CA*

A. "I present a 30-second infomercial at networking events like Resources for Women, which is an international group, and chambers of commerce. We also come to people's work and show what we're doing. We do this a lot for businesses in the downtown area, like law firms."

– Annette Solis, *Nettie's Gift Baskets, Tucson, AZ*

A. "Last year we worked with a list broker to test different business names. It's expensive. We chose names with proven direct mail purchases, defined by geography. We also chose women's names because women tend to be better buyers than men, especially at Valentine's. Men give flowers to women but women don't want to give flowers to men. We mailed a four-color piece. We had a decent response rate.

"Also, a TV program asked us to give away 10 baskets for a ladies' night on TV. We've done it for the last few years – more for goodwill; it didn't seem to bring many calls – but last year we got a number of orders."

– Robbin Steiff, *Send Me No Flowers, Pittsburgh, PA*

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