

TableWare

INTERNATIONAL

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STEELITE PERFORMANCE *craft aqua*




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INTERNATIONAL

THE ART OF PRESENTATION

As US retailers face into a busy holiday season, **Tableware International** partnered with trade fair organisers **AndMore** to uncover where they source brands, how they adapt business practices to suit demand, and we hear about some key issues facing store owners...

Talking shop

Name: Bridget Johns, founder and CEO, To & From
toandfrom.com

What are the key issues you are facing as a retailer currently?

The slowing consumer, particularly online, is definitely one of the things we are paying attention to – as well as the level of promotional activity we expect as we head towards the holidays. The good news is supply-chain problems seem to be mostly resolved and there are a lot of great products coming to market!



Name: Bob Brouman, owner, Fragile (Atlanta, GA)
www.fragilegifts.com

What are the key issues you are facing as a retailer currently?

I think Amazon is a threat to all retail. Some people think that Amazon has the best price. Younger consumers go to Amazon because it's easy and that is what they like. They just don't want to take the time to look in person, to feel and to touch. They just do what is quick and easy for them. Our customers, who have shopped with us over the years, still love coming into the store, seeing the selection, and know that we will



gift wrap and ship if needed. They like the customer service! You do not get that from Amazon.

Do you tend to source from US brands, or are you open to suppliers from Europe/Asia etc?

Almost all of our suppliers have US distribution – that is most important to us.

Have you noticed any emerging trends in tabletop?

Since Covid we have seen brides are getting back to registering for formal dinnerware. They realise that this is their chance to get dinnerware that they can use forever. Gold rimmed is dominating.

We have seen brides are getting back to registering for formal dinnerware

Finally, which tradeshow do you personally find most useful to attend and why?

Atlanta - it has become the best show. You can find pretty much anything there. We used to go to NY twice a year but no more.



Name: Art and Martha Nading, owners, The Extra Ingredient, Inc. (Greensboro, NC)

www.extraingredient.com

What are the key issues you are facing as a retailer currently?

Retailers are always facing pricing issues, supply issues and growing a customer base.

Pricing continues to be a concern as freight is getting more expensive... and we hope we are seeing some stabilisation in this area. This has been a better year regarding supply availability as Pandemic issues have waned. We have seen an increase in sales for all our product categories and which has been quite encouraging. We have been able to increase our customer base with our on-line e-commerce and social media.

Do you tend to source from US brands, or are you open to suppliers from Europe/Asia etc?

We are always looking for good suppliers who make quality merchandise. In looking for high-end, quality-driven suppliers, we are aware that our customers always appreciate the bonus of a US manufacturer.

The most important fact regarding Bbands: We look for suppliers who appreciate our channel of trade which is independent store and high-end. We shy away from products sold in mass market (and chain) channels. Many of our suppliers offer exclusivity that can only be found in the established, well-regarded independent store channel.

“The good news is supply-chain problems seem to be mostly resolved”

Do you tend to source from US brands, or are you open to suppliers from Europe/Asia etc?

We focus on mission-driven brands - primarily brands that have underrepresented founders, a focus on sustainability and/or companies that have the B Corp designation. We have a lot of made-in-the-US brands but also have brands that produce globally.

What tabletop items/collections/brands are popular with your customers currently?

We are doing very well with products that bring joy to the table – current best brands are Atelier Saucier, JK Adams, Furbish Studio and Verve Culture.

Have you noticed any emerging trends in tabletop?

A trend that we've seen across all categories that certainly extends to the home is with personalisation – this can be custom engraved cheese boards, monogrammed dinner napkins, or even personalized whisky glasses.

Finally, which trade shows do you personally find most useful to attend and why?

Of course, we love Shoppe Object; it's a perfect fit for our site and the types of brands we like to include. We also really appreciate Field & Supply.

Name: Kay Timm and Jane Wegand, owners
Grand Fête, (Hudson, Wisconsin)

What are the key issues you are facing as a retailer currently?

Some of the challenges include rising operating costs; rent, labour, shipping costs, business supplies have all increased dramatically in the past two years. E-commerce and online competition – national brand availability from online giants like Amazon has provided the customer the ease of shopping at home and shopping for price while in our store. Some of our suppliers are also selling direct to consumer, gaining our consumer base through warranties or direct sales which allow them to directly contact and sell to our customers. Inventory management – continued supply chain challenges require accessibility to same product with several suppliers. Many times we have to “overbuy” when available because being understocked can affect profitability the same as being overstocked. Differentiation in the marketplace – we are always working on how to differentiate ourselves and create a business model that sets us apart from others (both large and small) to create an experience for our customers that is fulfilling. With the challenges we face, our strength is focused on events, service, and creating an environment that is inspirational from the use of great ingredients to great kitchen tools and entertaining at home.

Do you tend to source from US brands, or are you open to suppliers from Europe/Asia/etc.?

We support our locally produced products and consumables and include them whenever possible in doing demos or training in our store. We source from US companies when we can and while many import products, we often promote “made in the USA” as our customer base is interested in this and will tend to buy local or US made products

if possible. However, we also source from Europe for textiles and home décor. With that said, products must be evaluated for price, quality and design no matter where they come from.

What tabletop items/collections/brands are popular with your customers currently?

Visual merchandising is important in our store as it creates the ambiance for our customers. We tend to work with tabletop collections that have complete themes that include textiles, dinnerware, glassware, decor and then we mix cookware and gadgets with it to create an entire kitchen concept. We use resources such as Now Designs/ Danica, Tag, BIA.

Have you noticed any emerging trends in tabletop?

Mix and match tableware - customers are not looking to replace full place setting, they are looking to augment what they have to give a completely different feel. They are looking to personalise their entertaining experience mixing colours, patterns and textures. We teach them how to “layer” their table! minimalist, clean lines, simple shapes, functionality. While kitchens have grown in size and become the primary focus of the home, the consumer still wants items that have multiple functionality. Tabletop follows fashion trends with a resurgence of retro designs and colours, and blue continues to make a strong comeback. Finally, mixing materials – metallic and copper finishes are important year around. Mixing materials adds depth and interest.



Name: Paul Denoly, owner, Hawkins New York (New York, NY)

www.hawkinsnewyork.com

**HAWKINS
NEW
YORK**

What are the key issues you are facing as a retailer currently?

As a retailer dedicated to the home industry, we're not alone in adjusting to the post pandemic boom and emphasis on supporting small business we experienced in 2020 and 2021. As a small online retailer, we have also been affected by the ever-changing landscape of digital marketing, led by necessary regulatory changes that have made it more challenging to reach our customers and compete with the larger retailers and DTC brands. As a wholesaler to independent retailers across the US, these challenges seem to be felt by many.

What tabletop items/collections/brands are popular with your customers currently?

We are doing very well with our Essential Dinnerware collection. Our customers are drawn to the colours and its price point and versatility. Available in six colours and seven silhouettes, customers love the chance to mix and match to make it more personal. It can be dressed up for more formal gatherings or casual for every day. We also encourage our

“There also seems to be a resurgence of patterned hand-painted dinnerware”

customers to mix and match our dinnerware with their heirloom or vintage pieces they may already have. Our corresponding essential table linens and glassware have also done very well and offered in the same tonal six colorways.

Have you noticed any emerging trends in tabletop?

Colour is being embraced much more frequently and not just with accessories or seasonal novelty items. There also seems to be a resurgence of patterned hand-painted dinnerware, both with formal and informal settings.

Name: Mary S. Moore, founder and CEO
The Cook's Warehouse (Atlanta, GA)
cookwarehouse.com

What are the key issues you are facing as a retailer currently?

There is increasing pressure from other online retailers, 3P marketplaces, and direct sales marketing by the brands we carry. More suppliers are developing robust direct sales operations and spend significant money on marketing direct-to-consumer opposed to partnering the same with independent retailers who have historically been the brand builders in community. Margin erosion from increased costs on freight, shipping, and labour. It's challenging to manage all the current accounts we have and still find time to discover new vendors – a specific challenge related to tabletop. Also tabletop requires a significant investment to have a successful assortment and then time to work through what does/doesn't work and reassert.

Have you noticed any emerging trends in tabletop?

There is a strong trend away from fine china/porcelain patterns toward dinnerware with a more natural aesthetic that can be dressed both up for a soirée or down for a Tuesday night dinner after work.

“It's challenging to manage all the current accounts we have and still find time to discover new vendors – a specific challenge related to tabletop”

