

How to create food advertising that sells.

by ^{FE} ESPRESSO, San Diego's Coffeehouse & Café Newspaper.

In 18 years of ad sales, ESPRESSO has noticed some recurring elements and patterns in our food clients' ads; some greatly increase returns on ad expenditures while others merely keep the client's name before the public. Below are some of the things we've learned about food business advertising:

Position is important.

Positioning food tells a customer what a product is, who it's for, how to use or enjoy it and how to know and regard the product advertised. Position is the *single most important element* in food advertising. The result of your advertising depends less on how it is written or photographed than how it's positioned. Get it right and all is wonderful. Get it wrong....well, better to get it right. There are four elements to good positioning with food advertising. They are:

1. Know the customer.

If you have a market of young people, or vegans or "foodies" or environmentally conscious clientele, know what information they're looking for, then make sure they get it. Youth wants to feel sophisticated; vegans want assurance that their choices mesh with their beliefs; foodies want decadence, taste sensation and exclusivity to enhance their self image and status. Environmentally

sensitive people want to know how the product was farmed, made or processed. Knowing who you want to sell to—and offering the information they need to make a buying decision—are key elements in your position.

2. Tell the client how and when to enjoy your product.

Some things are best when paired with other things; chocolate syrup and vanilla ice cream; port and brie; bread and butter; milk and cookies. Give your clientele the "inside" knowledge that will help them enjoy what you offer. They'll appreciate it and prefer to shop with you. Food clients often seek that personal bond with their favored businesses and respond with repeat patronage. You can be their hero if you give them what they need.

Be realistic. Eating habits aren't changed in a day. If your product is new or different, it may be easier to offer it as a substitute to what's known. Familiarity can set you apart—later.

3. Don't forget to tell them it tastes good.

Don't get sidetracked into positions that ignore your product's taste.

4. Give your foods a distinct personality.

Without personality, there's nothing to separate it from all the competitors in the field. You

may know the superior quality of what you offer, but the public doesn't—and needs your assurance. Busch Bavarian Beer, See's Old Time Chocolate Candies, Kentucky Fried Chicken; all have personality. They're remembered. Remembering pays.

You can't flirt in the dark.

Once you determine the right positioning, you must communicate it effectively to your public. You must make your ads interesting, engaging, appealing and arresting enough to make a reader want to take action. Just like trying to get noticed by an attractive person, you can't flirt in the dark. Here are five things that can help:

1. If your product is new, say so.

You can only be new once so make the most of it! People notice. They'll want to find out and tell their friends.

2. If you have a real point of difference, make the most of it.

Demonstrate it, too. Use color photos of foods *ready to be eaten*, not ingredients. Show it close up and preferably life size. This increases the recall of the ad and it stimulates people to find that food *right now*, too.

3. People respond to recipes, menus, cooking ideas.

Use them when you can. Recipes increase readership of ad copy, but never bury them in tiny type or print them over a

color tint, especially on newsprint. Don't use recipes that are too exotic or difficult to prepare. You want the client to engage with you, not recoil from something too complicated.

4. Don't get cute.

Food is the staff of life; it isn't funny to many people—especially if they have to make a significant economic or social choice to have it instead of something else. If you make it funny, you lose status in the public eye. Who takes Chuck E. Cheese, Jack in the Box or Ronald McDonald's seriously?

5. Advertise in ESPRESSO

People who care about food are found in the outlets that offer specialty items. Of course this includes many coffeehouses where fine coffees are roasted fresh daily. ESPRESSO has expanded its food coverage to satisfy its readership's demands and offers an excellent medium to find the clientele you need.

You can advertise anywhere; it makes sense to advertise with a newspaper that knows your clientele—and how to help you find them.

John Rippo, Publisher,

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