

HomeStyle

Canada's Housewares Magazine

July 2020

RETAIL SUCCESS STORIES:

SURVIVING *THE* PANDEMIC

BALANCING BOTH SIDES:
A FIRST PERSON ACCOUNT

WHAT'S BREWING
IN COFFEE MAKERS
& KETTLES

CLEAR TRENDS
in GLASSWARE

TAKING STOCK
of the HOME BAR



Passing Down Heritage

Bringing back vintage designs from Le Creuset's archive, the Heritage Stoneware collection is a robust and versatile choice for one-dish baking, serving, and storing. Le Creuset bakeware, dinnerware and beloved café collection are all made of this dense raw material, selected due to its properties that allow it to function as durable bakeware and elegant serveware.

Fired at high temperatures, and with low porosity that strengthen it against breakage, the enamel and colour coating of Le Creuset's stoneware is its unparalleled signature. The vibrant colours are applied with the same gradient technique that is used for Le Creuset Cast Iron, creating a cohesive collection across

different product categories. Due to its density, stoneware also retains temperatures more efficiently, keeping things cooler or warmer for longer periods of time.

The Heritage collection speaks to a simpler time, when our cookware was passed down from our parents, our meals were based on what was locally sourced and available, and our meals were an event. The design elements are expressed through hand sculpted fluted side handles that make it easy to transfer dishes from the oven to the table. The top loop handle on casseroles allow for dramatic reveals of what has been baking all afternoon, when served to friends and family.

The exterior and interior enamel creates a surface that easily releases food and is hardwearing and impermeable to discolouring or odours. These products will be sought out again and again for storing food in the fridge or freezer, on the counter preparing marinades or breading and in the oven for baking or roasting.

Simply said, a comprehensive collection that cooks as good as it looks.

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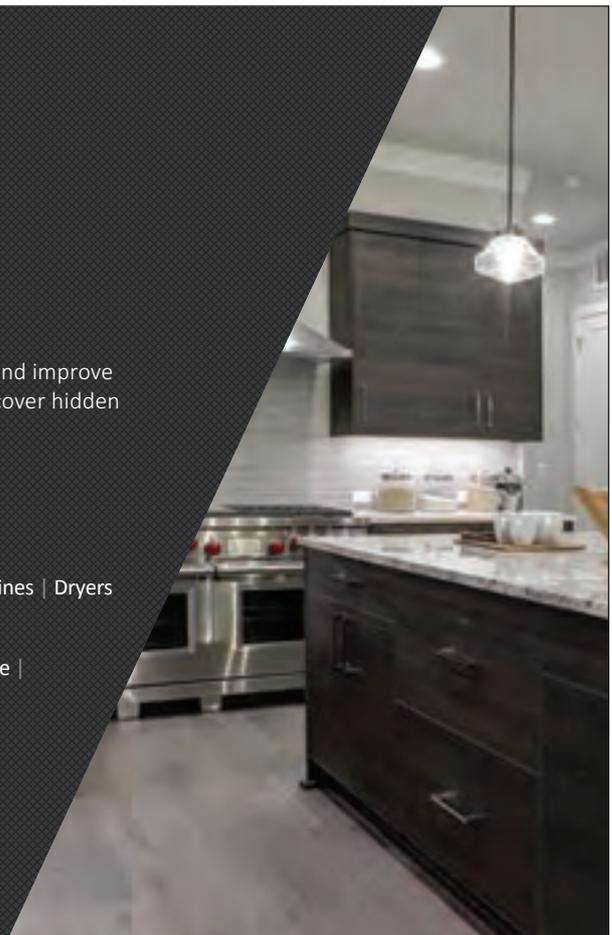
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We are people who need people

We are entering a new evolutionary stage of retail, in which big companies will get bigger and many mom-and-pop dreams will finally burst. Propelled by the pandemic, the e-commerce wave has become a tsunami and it will forever change the way housewares retailers serve their customers.



Most of the retailers I've met in my career went into this business because they actually enjoy interacting with customers, live and in person. Chain store buyers are trained to entice consumers to spend more once they get in-store. It's what retail merchandising is all about. And kitchen shop owners are often foodies who went into business because they love cooking and want to share their joy. That usually involves creating one-on-one relationships, a rarity post-pandemic.

Our connections are the foundation for everything in our lives, yet even before we had heard of COVID-19, more people were living alone, and more were lonely. The percentage of one-person households in Canada quadrupled over the past three generations, from 7% in 1951 to 28% today. Chronic loneliness is more detrimental to our health than obesity or polluted air. Yet half of all consumers say they lack companionship or meaningful relationships. Imagine having to self-isolate at home without anyone looking out for you?

The human brain is an incredible social organ. Much of it is dedicated to creating and nurturing relationships. Most of our interactions aren't for any particular purpose beyond the interaction itself, which enriches social bonds and helps form strong ties in a community.

Scientists say it takes 66 days for new behaviours to become automatic or habitual. Roughly 40% of what we do every day is habitual, and we've been isolating and social distancing for over three months. How much of it has become ingrained?

Even before the virus, e-commerce had become a massive disruptor to our global marketplace. Researchers have been studying how new technologies (such as buying online only) affect and alter our relationships, and it's significant. For example, in group settings and one-to-one interactions, eye contact divulges a wealth of information. It's a hard-wired social cue that provides information between the speaker and the listener.

Now that we are reopening our bricks and mortar stores, the precautions necessary are expensive and time-consuming. As Heather Reisman of Indigo explains: "As we create environments for our customers that are safe, we limit the number of people we can have in the store. It will be a lovely experience for those customers who come, I am absolutely certain. But the impact on the business is huge."

Retailers are nothing if not resilient (see our survivor stories in this issue.) I have been so encouraged by your attitude, by your perseverance, and your acceptance of the fact the store environment has been changed drastically, possibly forever.

This pandemic has prompted a retail reinvention like nothing we've ever seen. Will these drastic short term changes stick around for the long term? Will we ever return to our old social ways, our feeling of a tight-knit community? I hope so. Human communication is complex and dynamic and has been an essential part of the retail selling process. It requires the harmonious integration of both verbal and non-verbal components. A simple smile can speak volumes, but it sure is hard to see behind a face mask.

— Laurie O'Halloran
laurie@homestylemag.ca



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People In The News

• **Joel Marks** is retiring as Vice President at Home Hardware Stores after 39 years with the company. He will be replaced by Rob Szekszer, who has been appointed Vice President, Merchandise Hardlines. In addition, as a result of Marks's retirement, Home has named **Marianne Thompson** as Senior Vice President, Merchandise. In this expanded role, she will oversee the entire merchandise team at Home Hardware.

• Last May, Bed Bath and Beyond appointed **John Hartmann** as Chief Operating Officer of BBY and buybuy Baby. Formerly president and CEO of True Value Company, he will lead key areas of the company's transformation including IT, supply chain and real estate.

• Starfrit U.S.A. recently appointed **Jim Teml** as Vice President Sales and Business Development, USA markets. He has more than 30 years of experience in retail and consumer packaged goods.

• Following the cancellation of the The Inspired Home Show in Chicago last March, the International Housewares Association has postponed the Global Innovator Awards (*gia*) dinner until the 2021 show. As such, Peter Alyward and Don Moores of **HOME on water st.** in St. John's, Newfoundland will represent our country again in 2021.

Despite the gala cancellation, the 2020 entries were evaluated by the global jury and six global honourees were announced during a live-streamed presentation on April 23rd. They are: Reina Batata Bazar of **Argentina**, Few and Far of Australia, Isetan Shinjuku of **Japan**, Central Department Store of **Thailand**, PROMENU of **Ukraine**, and Tavola of **United Arab Emirates**. These countries will select new *gia* honourees for next year and bring both winners to the gala awards dinner in March of 2021.

A profile of Australian global honouree *Few & Far* is featured on page 54 in this issue.

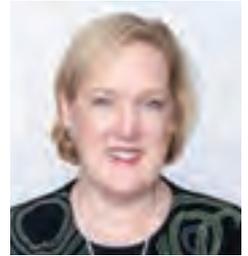
In Memoriam

• **Dirk Roy Hermanns** passed away unexpectedly from an undiagnosed heart condition on May 13th at the age of 48. Dirk leaves his wife Carol Hermanns (nee Lacher), and mother Gerti Hermanns, who worked at Embros Kitchen Shop in Toronto for many years.

Dirk was the creative force behind Nicetys, the gourmet kitchenware store that Carol and Dirk opened in downtown Oakville. He worked tirelessly to make their dream come true and happily jumped in to do marketing, promotion, and help with buying.

• **Teresa Holden** passed away on April 25th at the age of 54 after a brief battle with cancer. She was the wife of the late David Holden, both of whom were long time employees of Hamilton Beach.

• **Peggy Liddle** passed away on March 10, after a brief battle with lung cancer. Peggy enjoyed a successful career in the retail industry working as a buyer for Neiman-Marcus, Chefs Catalog, Tuesday Morning, and finally, as sales manager for Edgecraft, where she was a familiar face at the Toronto Gift Show for many years.



Correction



• The wrong photo was used in the story about the Breville Bluiicer in the March issue. The real Bluiicer is shown above.

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Hello, amazing retailers!

I hope all of you are faring well. As many of you start to settle into a new way of living and working, let's pause and acknowledge *resilience*. We've all experienced moments of pain, frustration and even despair through the pandemic crisis, but a newfound strength has emerged in facing these new challenges. Along the way, we realized that defeat is not an option.

All across Canada, we've seen *small retailers like you hustle and fight hard* for your businesses. You've been *pushed to innovate, adapt and embrace a new way of doing things*. Well done! You've managed to juggle this all while taking care of loved ones and worrying deeply about those out of reach during the pandemic. The juggling act continues.

During this time, our company has worked to be compassionate with you, our customer community. We have been finding ways in which we can support you, like offering flexible credit when times are tough. *Danica is a family owned and run business, with a rich 36 year history* and we are dedicated to being *The Company You Keep*. Our hard-working sales reps are part of our extended family and we would not be here without them. Everyone at Danica is here for you on your journey forward, just as you have supported us faithfully for decades.

Our *Shop Local* collection was created as a salute to each of you who *make our communities diverse* and allow our Main Streets to thrive. The series has taken on a much larger meaning as many businesses have been forced to adapt in

order to survive the pandemic crisis. Now, more than ever, *choosing to Shop Local and Shop Small are key to the survival of our independent businesses across Canada*. Additionally, supporting small business allows a broad and diverse spectrum of entrepreneurs from all backgrounds to thrive and have their voices heard. This collection helps your customers show their support for you, and celebrates your contributions to your community.

We want to support healthy communities through our own actions, too. First, by using our textile expertise to create a unique collection of *100% cotton face masks* to help keep folks safe, and second, by *donating \$1 from each face mask to Food Charities* in the USA and Canada to support those deeply impacted by food insecurity in the pandemic and beyond. We also continue to donate a percentage of our profits from all products to *Education Without Borders*.

Today, and every day, *I celebrate your strength and survival* throughout this crisis. I'm excited to start moving forward and see you thrive again.

Stay strong and keep up the fight. We're right here with you.

SUSHIL ARORA, CEO & EVERYONE AT DANICA



I always look forward to the retail viewpoint column by Candace Sutcliffe in *Home Style* for her 'on point' and insightful comments on the state of the retail landscape.

I would like to comment on her March article, which focuses on a subject (direct selling by vendors) that should be of concern not just in our industry, but in all of retail as we know it.

When I started my career in the consumer electronics industry, I lived through a trend similar to what the housewares industry is going through presently. I have seen the effect of major manufacturers taking a short term approach to grow their market share by unfairly supporting big box, mass and discount retail chains. They are able to gain market share, while losing all the loyal and supportive retailers who are now unable to compete.

These retailers, for the most part, were instrumental in helping launch and position new product, educate the consumer and create a demand. It is only then that the mass merchants, having limited trained staff, are open to listing the product. We smaller retailers created that demand. Most of these channels are not properly equipped to demonstrate, inform and educate the consumer in the same way that we can.

With the demise of independent retailers, manufacturers will find that the big box outlets are not always prepared to launch new, exciting and innovative products. They are then forced to open their own retail outlets in order to properly position and promote their wares.

The problem is obvious. Unfortunately the solution is not so evident. If any industry is to remain relevant it must continue to innovate, develop, and inform. The most efficient way to do so is to avail oneself of efficient resources that are capable and incentivized to educate and promote. Hopefully the wheel will turn before it's too late, and well-positioned independent retailers will once again play an important role in the introduction and education of new and exciting products and technologies.

*Dave Abrams,
Ares Stores, Montreal*

Consumers using fewer credit cards

A sharp decline in the use of credit cards at the end of March led to the first drop in consumer debt balances in more than a decade, according to Equifax Canada. Average balances on debt excluding mortgages dropped 0.5% to \$23,386 in the first quarter from a year earlier. With stores and restaurants closed in March due to the coronavirus, consumers cut back on credit card use, leading to the decline in balances.

The trend gained momentum in April, "with few signs that consumers are looking to debt for support in the early days of the pandemic," says Bill Johnston, vice president of data and analytics at Equifax.

Massive cash injections from the federal government and the Bank of Canada, along with deferrals on mortgages and other loans appear to be helping consumers stave off difficulties. Consumer insolvencies plunged to the lowest since 2007 in April. And household debt-service ratios, a key measure of financial strain, declined in the first quarter, according to Statistics Canada.

Most retailers not able to pay their rent

Commercial rent continues to be the most critical aspect of many businesses in Canada as they struggle to come out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A new survey, which included businesses in Toronto, Guelph, and Ottawa, found that 72% of businesses could not make all of June's rent while 63% did not pay all of May's rent and 50% did not pay April's rent. Also, 78% of businesses feel they will not make all of July's rent.

It's a growing number and an increasingly worrisome situation. John Kiru, Executive Director of the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas, says each of the recent surveys got progressively higher in terms of businesses having challenges.

"It confirmed what our expectations were. The bottom line is that we felt 40% to possibly 50% of the businesses on

Main Street will likely fail if this pandemic went three to four months," adds Kiru. "What these surveys have shown is that we are on that trajectory."

"Small businesses traditionally have one to two months staying power in terms of paying bills, in terms of paying their rents. That third survey brought those numbers forward for us. The third one also included beyond Toronto as we reached out to Ottawa and Guelph. We wanted to show that it's not a Toronto centric problem and that the actual numbers impact communities right across the province."

NPD shows jump in housewares sales

Joe Derochowski from The NPD Group conducted a very interesting webinar in late April that explored actual sales statistics behind the home and housewares industry, pointing out the product categories and subcategories that have shown actual growth over the past several weeks. That webinar, along with several others that focus on current events, can be viewed on the IHA homepage at www.housewares.org and offers some very encouraging news.

Small appliances sales grew every week from March 15th through April 18th. Sales increases are being led by home environment and kitchen electrics categories, with 74% of small appliance subcategories enjoying growth.

Although initially down, housewares and personal care sales have increased in recent weeks with 42% of housewares and 29% of personal care subcategories experiencing growth. The positive trendline is expected to continue.

Williams-Sonoma's three banners generated 55% of total sales online last year, and the pandemic has spurred even faster growth in the retailer's digital channels. The company booked 31.2% sales growth in the most recent quarter, and e-commerce now accounts for 71% of sales at the Williams Sonoma, Pottery Barn and West Elm banners.



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Sur La Table facing financial troubles

Two of Sur La Table's publicly traded creditors doubt the Seattle-based kitchenware retailer will repay more than \$31 million in senior debt, suggesting the operator of 130 stores is in financial peril in the wake of coronavirus lockdowns around the nation.

The two creditors slashed their combined valuation of the debt by more than a third in regulatory filings this spring. The moves lend credence to a May report by Bloomberg News that Sur La Table, owned by the private equity firm Investcorp, is headed for a bankruptcy reorganization or sale.

The sharp write-downs for the quarter ended March 31 indicate that their confidence in being repaid "has fallen dramatically," says Thomas Gilbert, of Washington's Foster School of Business. BlackRock Capital Investment reported after the quarter's end that its \$21 million investment in Sur La Table debt now has an estimated "fair value" of only \$13.86 million, a 34% cut. A smaller investment company, Capitala Finance, slashed its valuation of the debt securities by 41%, writing down its \$10.5 million to less than \$6.2 million.

Sur La Table, launched from a Pike Place Market store in 1972, now runs mostly mall-based locations across the country, including 85 that offer cooking classes, as well as an online business. It temporarily closed its retail outlets March 20 as many states issued stay-home orders, and has slowly started to reopen some "in select locations where permitted by government order."

Investcorp, a Bahrain-based company, acquired Sur La Table in 2011 when it had 86 stores. It paid \$146 million.

Stokes to close unprofitable stores

Kitchenware retailer Stokes has announced it will be "reducing its retail footprint in Canada" and streamlining its head office operations in Montreal.

"After many years of solid financial performance, Stokes, like most other retailers, is adapting to fundamental changes in the industry, including how customers shop," the company announced in a statement in March. "The company will continue investing in its online business, which has experienced material growth over the last few years." The company will be closing less profitable stores, but will keep the majority of its retail locations across the country.

The closures are part of a proposal made to creditors as a means to secure its long-term viability. Once the restructuring is completed, Stokes will continue to employ approximately 1,000 Canadians. Management states the restructuring process will allow Stokes to continue its business in the long-term.

London Drugs shares shelf space

During the pandemic, London Drugs was offering shelf space in its stores to small businesses in Western Canada that were closed due to public health regulations. Businesses across Western Canada could submit products for consideration.

"As an essential service, we are here to help our local small businesses while also providing an opportunity for customers to pick up their favourite local items and support their favourite local companies," says Clint Mahlman, president and COO of London Drugs. Select outlets of the chain transformed their central aisles into a "Local Central" zone, boosting products from local businesses.

Plan will keep Neiman Marcus alive

A bankruptcy judge has approved a financing plan for Neiman Marcus that will provide \$250 million in immediate financing and \$150 million more in the

coming months. The funding is expected to be sufficient to keep the luxury retailer afloat as it moves forward with store reopenings and reorganizes under a plan to cut \$4 billion in debt.

Shopify adds new mobile shopping app

E-commerce enabler Shopify (the largest publicly traded company in Canada) is introducing Shop, a mobile shopping app designed to create a more intuitive online shopping experience from product discovery to package delivery.

The company says that it has reimaged online shopping for its customers to provide those businesses with greater convenience, transparency and personalization. The timing of the introduction has particular relevance, given social distancing and stay-at-home measures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and its customers becoming more reliant on online ordering.

Shop gives users the ability to easily discover local businesses, receive relevant product recommendations from favorite brands, check out easily and track all online orders. The app brings together Shopify expertise in commerce and features including Shop Pay, a one-click accelerated checkout, and Arrive, an app to track online orders.

"Shopify has focused the last decade on solving complex problems for entrepreneurs by making commerce seamless and accessible," says Carl Rivera, Shop general manager. "Now, we want to do the same for customers. We set out to solve the common pain points in the customer's shopping journey, while developing specific features, like local business discovery, that will be relevant today and in the future."

Shopify also recently joined forces with Pinterest to launch an app that enables merchants to post catalogues to the platform and feature items as shoppable pins, which is now available in the U.S. and Canada and will soon roll out in countries where ads are available. The app also features an ad-buying interface and offers the ability to update products and analyze results.



GoodCooks line offers convenience

With so many consumers cooking all their meals at home, convenience is essential when it comes to food prep. Bradshaw Home Canada offers several innovative solutions in their GoodCook line. New this year, the Fruit & Veggie Divider, below left, can quarter small fruits and vegetables lengthwise end to end faster than a knife. It even divides grapes, cherry tomatoes or olives to top salads. It turns on when the probe is opened and has auto shut off after five minutes.



An easy way to create smart cookies

Canadians are baking again and Danesco is ready to meet their cookie decorating needs with this new, easy to use set. Packaged in a beautiful giftbox with a sugar cookie and royal icing recipe inside, the cookie decorating set includes four tips, four stainless steel cookie cutter, two silicone pastry bags and two couplers for securing the tip.

Major credit cards raise their tap limits

Canada's major credit cards raised their tap limits from \$100 to \$250 in April and a new study shows Canadians have quickly gotten used to the higher limits. A study by Moneris found that contactless transactions over \$100 equal 40% of transactions. The average transaction is \$148 and contactless payments are now approaching half of all transactions at 45.9%. Even when the pandemic comes to an end, Moneris says the public has accepted the higher tap level and expects the \$250 limit to remain.

Even though credit cards have a higher tap limit, debit cards remain at the \$100. The Retail Council of Canada would like to see the tap limit of debit cards raised to \$250 as well.

"Contactless payments will be used more frequently and obviously for that reason we would like to see Interac get its level up to the same as the credit cards," explains Karl Littler of The Retail Council of Canada.

A survey by Payments Canada found that 75% of Canadians say they're spending less than pre-COVID-19. About 62% are using less cash and 42% say they avoid shopping where contactless payments are not accepted.

Canadians are also sending more e-transfers due to the pandemic. A record was set in April, when Canadians used more than 61 million e-transfers to send and receive money.

Shopping is still a social experience

Although the pandemic has accelerated the move to online shopping, Greg Wilson at the Retail Council of Canada, says he believes there will be pent-up demand for the in-person retail experience. "Shopping is still a social and cultural experience – it's not all about efficiency." This was certainly the case when the French luxury brand Hermès reopened their flagship store in Guangzhou in April. It recorded \$2.7 million in sales, the most ever reported for one location in a single day!

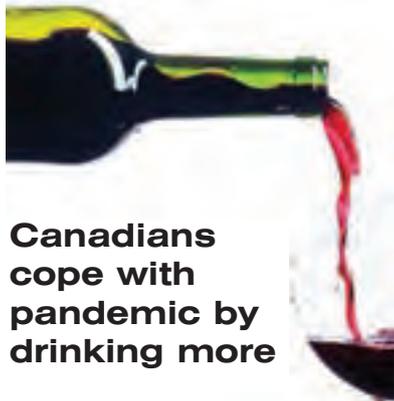
IN BRIEF...

- On August 4th, Abbott will be launching a virtual showroom and trade show. Open 24/7, customers can "walk" through the Abbott showroom displays from the comfort of their home or business. All products will be directly linked to the user's shopping cart on the abbottcollection.com website, making it easy to place orders. Customers will have the option of touring the showroom on their own, or they can opt to screen-share with their Sales Representative or Customer Service Representative. Additionally, Abbott's live agents will also be available to guide customers through the virtual showroom experience.

- Sparkling beverage-making brand SodaStream plans to remove 67 billion plastic bottles from production by 2025 to help reduce plastic pollution. The company has eliminated about five billion single-use plastic bottles since 2019 and also is using solar energy and embracing natural gas.

- Cuisivin has introduced a line of high quality, 3-layer non-medical masks to meet the changing demands of retailers. Produced in a certified factory, each unit is sterilized and sold in individually sealed packaging. The 3-layer design features a: water and UV resistant outer layer, fine filter middle layer, breathable anti-bacterial nano-fabric inner layer. These eco-friendly masks are reusable and washable.

- Libbey and its U.S.-based subsidiaries recently filed voluntary petitions for a court-supervised reorganization under Chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code in the U.S. The company's international subsidiaries in Canada, China, Mexico, the Netherlands and Portugal are not included in the Chapter 11 proceedings and each will continue to operate in the normal course of business.



Canadians cope with pandemic by drinking more

The Coronavirus has spurred more than just a renewed interest in the Mexican beer of the same name. It has also spawned a spate of 'lockdown cocktails' as more consumers started celebrating happy hour at home.

From Ina Garten's massive Cosmo 'quarantini' to online beer pong, alcohol consumption has definitely been on the rise since we started social distancing.

In a recent Nanos poll commissioned by the Centre on Substance Abuse and Addiction, one quarter of Canadians aged 34 to 54 say they have increased their drinking. Stress, loneliness and anxiety are known to lead to increased substance abuse, and it doesn't help that the lines were blurred between work and downtime.

Retail exec predicts big decline in malls

A third of America's malls are going to shut permanently by 2021, with their demise accelerated due to the pandemic, says Jan Kniffen, a former exec at The May Department Stores.

He expects to see at least 20% of malls reduce their size and he believes a third of the malls go a lot sooner than we thought. Initially, he was expecting roughly 33% of America's malls to go dark by 2030. Now, Kniffen thinks that will happen by next year.

There are still about 1,000 malls operating in the U.S. today, according to commercial real estate services firm Green Street Advisors.

Many have adapted to working from home

Before the pandemic, one in 17 Canadians worked from home and continue to do so. But a new research poll shows that after COVID-19 hit, that jumped to 24%. And of those, 21% say they love it, 23% person like it, 38% say it's fine, and 18% either don't like it or hate it.

But there is definitely a shift towards more home-based workers post pandemic. One quarter plan to continue to work from home, at least occasionally, even after the office opens up.

Almost half (47%) indicated they're about as productive at home as they were at the office. Some of the things they missed the most about working from the office included in-person interactions with customers and clients (38%), having better-defined work hours (23%), eating out during the day (23%) and getting dressed to leave the home each morning. About a third of respondents missed getting away from the family for a few hours a day.

Shoppers concerned about health & safety

As the country slowly reopens all businesses, health and safety are top of mind for Canadian shoppers, according to a new survey. Conducted by IPSOS, the poll suggests even when all restrictions are eased, four in five people will delay going shopping.

Out of those hesitant to return to stores in the time of COVID-19, 54% say they are worried about crowding and 41% fear getting sick.

Eighty-two per cent of respondents say the proper safety protocols are the most important factor when deciding whether to return to a store. That compares to 17% who say customer service matters the most. Meanwhile, 64% of respondents say they will stop shopping at a location that doesn't prioritize shoppers' health and safety.

The survey also reveals there's a generational difference in how people respond to shopping amid the global health crisis. At 71%, baby boomers are the most likely to stop shopping at a

store due to health and safety concerns. This is in comparison to 58% of millennials and half of generation Z, who are less likely to alter their behaviours based on fears over cleanliness.

What was cooking during lockdown?

SEMrush, a data trends provider, kept track of key trends throughout the spring as COVID-19 concerns had people staying at home. From recipes that caught on via social media or others that simply provided warmth in a stressful time, consumers were using their kitchens on a more regular basis for experimentation and relief.

These were the top 20 most searched recipes online during lockdown:

- Whipped coffee
- Bread - mostly Sourdough
- Banana bread
- Cinnamon rolls and buns
- Pizza dough
- Chocolate chip cookies
- Brownies
- Apple pie
- Pie crust
- Cacio e pepe
- Fried rice
- French toast
- Lasagna
- Asparagus
- Biscuit
- Cornbread
- Shepherd's pie

A new campaign from American Express is asking Canadians to shop at their local small businesses as they recover from the the pandemic. The new **Shop Small** campaign encourages Canadians to patronize nearby shops and restaurants with advertising, and by giving shoppers rebates in the form of statement credits when they buy local with their Amex card. American Express is also updating its Shop Small Map, to help customers find eligible businesses, and giving businesses tools to help them attract customers.

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eRetailer summit will now be held in March

In response to the travel and public health uncertainties created by the spread of the novel coronavirus, the management of the Home Improvement eRetailer Summit, in consultation with its has rescheduled the event to March 7th to 9th, 2021, from its previously scheduled date of October 7th to 9th, 2020. It will remain at the Aloft Chicago Downtown River North Hotel, Chicago.

The virus, ironically, has served as an accelerator for online sales, which pre-pandemic had already been steadily climbing as a percentage of total retail volume. The Salesforce Shopping Index, which analyzes the activity of one billion consumers worldwide, found 20% digital commerce growth in the first quarter of this year.

Ambiente exhibitors hopeful for 2021 fair

“Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the entire consumer goods industry is facing a difficult year. But we already have an optimistic outlook for the future with exhibit space at Ambiente 2021 already 90% filled,” says Nicolette Naumann, Vice President of Ambiente. “After such a difficult time, trade needs new momentum to boost consumption. Moreover, the need for communication and face-to-face encounters is becoming increasingly apparent.”

Exhibitors and visitors who attended Ambiente in Frankfurt this February – the only international fair held this spring – benefited from great ordering conditions despite the impacts of the virus, which had started to take hold.

“This shows that Ambiente is the hotspot for the industry. Exhibitors and trade visitors can find high-caliber contacts, share views on current challenges, talk about market and design developments and discover trends and opportunities in all segments,” adds Naumann.

Ambiente 2020 provided fresh inspiration by enlarging its dining area to create a dedicated platform for the hotel, restaurant and catering sector (HoReCa). The new hall 6.0 was the ideal hub for national and international decision-

makers in the hospitality segment. After its successful launch visitors can look forward to a dedicated HoReCa Hall 6.0 again in 2021 and leading international speakers in the HoReCa Academy.

The special Focus on Design presentation will be a further highlight of Ambiente 2021. For the second time, the coming Ambiente will showcase extraordinary products from a select design nation or region. The fair will take place February 19th to 23rd, 2021.

NY NOW postpones fair until October

NY NOW has decided, in light of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis and after careful consideration, to postpone the 2020 Summer Market which had been scheduled for August 8th to 12th, 2020, at the Jacob Javits Center.

With the interest of the retail community in mind, and to provide buyers a strong, convenient, and varied Market Week, NY NOW and Shoppe Object are working together to reschedule the New York Market Week to October 2020. The NY NOW Fall Edition will now be held at the Javits Center October 18th to 20th, 2020 and Shoppe Object will stage at Pier 36 October 20th to 22nd.

During the height of the pandemic in New York City, which was hit particularly hard, the Javits Center was turned into a makeshift hospital thanks to the cooperation of president Alan Steel.

Atlanta and Las Vegas shift show dates

Following a comprehensive survey of gift and home furnishings buyers and suppliers, International Market Centers (IMC) has opted to move its summer 2020 markets in Atlanta and Las Vegas. IMC is postponing both markets until August, with Atlanta Market now running August 13th to 18th and Las Vegas Market running August 30th to September 3rd.

IMC surveyed its entire buyer and supplier universe – 180,000+ retailers and designers and nearly 6,000 manufacturers and sales agencies across the

gift, home furnishings and apparel industries with results which were statistically significant. Retailer respondents expressed immediate need for inventory, preference for buying new product from existing vendors and intent to source both at physical markets and on digital platforms. Survey results also indicated that COVID-19 related concerns about travel sentiment and market attendance will decrease over time and with key health and safety mitigants. Additionally, the utility of digital tools for sourcing and preparing for in-person markets was cited by many.

“We believe that with modifications to Atlanta Market and Las Vegas Market’s timing and format and implementation of rigorous health and safety protocols, IMC can deliver the markets our buyers need and are willing to attend,” says Bob Maricich, IMC CEO.

With these changes, Atlanta Market will be the first show of the gift and home industry’s summer market season and Las Vegas Market will offer the added benefit of running concurrently with the National Hardware Show, which runs September 1st to 3rd at the Las Vegas Convention Center.

Both markets will feature new trade show layouts designed to enable social distancing and traffic control. In line with buyer sentiment, neither market will host at-market social gatherings for the summer editions. All programming and trend features will be presented through digital market channels.

Toronto show cancelled

After much discussion and in consultation with the entire retail community, the Canadian Gift Association made the decision to cancel the Fall 2020 Toronto Gift + Home Market, scheduled for August 9th to 12th. CanGift is committed to giving its customers a safe and enjoyable experience at the spring Toronto Gift + Home Market. It will be presented January 31st to February 4th at the Toronto Congress Centre.

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Post pandemic – a chance to reset

By Candace Sutcliffe, COO/Co-Proprietor
CA Paradis/The Chef's Paradise, Ottawa

Flexibility: (n) the quality of bending easily without breaking; the ability to be easily modified; the willingness to change or compromise

I believe the word flexibility to be one of the most important nouns in the dictionary; but also one of the most underutilized. In business, the term has a simple definition: being able to pivot fast to meet consumer demand from inventory to delivery.

Being flexible speaks volumes to our post-pandemic retail survival. The ability to bend, both upward and downward, without breaking, is the core of any business. The agility required to meet increased demand during peak seasons or spontaneous supply demands can be equally as devastating as an economic downturn or temporary closure. The unfortunate reality is that it has taken a global crisis to highlight just how inflexible retailing can be.

We speak regularly about the omnichannel experience. Consumers no longer think of retail as online/offline, but rather as a seamless integration between the two. Pre-pandemic, grocery and healthcare were the last two defenders against the rise of e-commerce but coronavirus just bent the slope of that adoption curve decidedly upward. With true domino effect, the closure of Sobeys's parent company, Empire Group, accelerated the launch of *Voilà* by Sobeys's by nearly six months in light of COVID-19. *Voilà* by Sobeys's delivers orders picked by robots in a fully automat-

ed warehouse. A *Voilà* teammate then safely drops the order curbside directly to the customer's home with minimal handling. Although the program is currently only offered in the GTA, Empire plans to roll out the program through the Quebec/Montreal/Ottawa corridor by fall.

According to the Retail Council of Canada, online grocery accounted for less than 2% of total grocery retail pre-pandemic but analysts predict a 15% increase as the "new normal" for grocery shopping.

Given the disruptions to supply chains globally, retailers should plan for unprecedented delivery delays, increased competition to procure goods, and unpredictable consumer buying patterns. Considering the challenge of forecasting in a volatile environment, it is critical to build a flexible and responsive inventory forecast based on the previous 2–3 weeks, while keeping seasonality and sudden popularity in mind. Knowing your inventory intimately is the only real future proof solution to an unpredictable market (or a second wave). The key is to figure out how to do more with less.

As retailers quickly transition to post-pandemic operations, a flexible labour model where employees are cross-trained within various departments and who are able to support different roles within a company are key to a successful reopening; restocking shelves, store cleanliness, supporting online/phone purchases are likely more in need than



in-store sales staff or cashiers.

For several retailers, the growth in online sales during the pandemic also means more possibility for staff to work remotely. Instead of being on the shop floor as a sales representative, you can be an online personal shopper, or an online customer service representative. In China, cosmetics retailer Forest Cabin trained 1,600 employees (formerly in-store associates) to host live stream make-up tutorials during their shutdown, increasing sales by 45% over the same period the prior year.

New operating procedures for post-COVID will also require additional flexibility for existing staff (higher cleaning requirements, triaging customers, managing line-ups, restocking shelves, increased parcel delivery, etc.) Given the higher workload in the new environment, retailers need to consider new ways to encourage team participation by deprioritizing other tasks, re-allocating employees or hiring additional support staff on a contractual basis.

The next 12 months are going to be a year of confidence building, one that not only includes retailers creating a safe environment for customers and employees, but also ensuring strong relationships with business partners like landlords, wholesale partners and other local businesses all willing to work together. ■



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Survivor stories

Once lockdown was enforced, small kitchen shop owners were forced to drastically alter their practices to stay afloat. Like restaurants, curbside pick-up and delivery became a part of daily business life. With everyone cooking at home, however, sales of housewares such as bakeware, cookware and bread machines started to soar, and some retailers had to scramble to keep up. We asked independent business owners across Canada to share their stories about helping their customers and their communities.

**Caren McSherry,
Gourmet Warehouse, Vancouver**

We are very fortunate that our store is a combination of specialty food and housewares which gave us the opportunity to serve both categories and stay open seven days a week throughout the pandemic. I am very thankful that our webmaster had our site fully populated and well managed in order to keep up with the huge surge in online business.

All of our staff wear gloves and masks. We sanitize the buggies and baskets three times a day and have installed plexiglass screens in front of all the cashiers and customer service desk. We also provide touch-less curb delivery, which has proven to be a huge success.

There is an obvious added stress on the staff so I have given everyone a \$2 per hour wage increase during this wild time. Five staff members chose to stay home as they are older employees and did not feel comfortable in the store.

We also did seven cooking shows last month that were added to our Facebook and Instagram pages so that customers can follow recipes with me online.

**Lex Vlassie and Mark Bartling
The Happy Cooker, Winnipeg**

Following the order to lockdown we were able to confirm with Manitoba Provincial Government that we provided essential products for the operation of commercial and residential kitchens. No staff were able to work, however, so we reduced our hours and we have been in the store ourselves seven days a week for the last two months. People need

bakeware and cookware!

Customers that elected to enter the store were very respectful of the physical distancing rules and asked for assistance to show stock rather than handle it. The majority of customers who came in knew exactly what they wanted so inevitably all visits resulted in sales.

We support a local chef, Ben Kramer, who is a private caterer/chef and has set up a support called *Made with Love Winnipeg* supporting Community Food Centres Canada (CFCC). Ben provides healthy meals to those in need during this pandemic. He is a customer at The Happy Cooker and we wanted to support a local chef involved in catering for those in our community that didn't have access to healthy food or in some cases, any food. We will continue to support this organization through the pandemic.

We have definitely seen an increased demand for curbside pickup. Increased email and social media requests have been great and we have also provided a delivery service for customers in Winnipeg on Sunday mornings.

Most of us have been forced by this dreadful pandemic to remain indoors and cooking has always been the heart and soul of many families. Breaking bread remains important. It's estimated that in Manitoba about 38% of meals before the pandemic were eaten outside of the home. The majority of these meals, – breakfast, lunch and dinner – have moved back inside the home.

People quickly realized what they needed for baking (bread making is super hot everywhere) and cooking

healthy meals. We noticed it's also beneficial for lots of kids as they are learning about where the food comes from and are experiencing the smells, tastes and textures of creations made at home more often than before.

Lots of new customers are excited to be in the kitchen.



On March 17th, the day we closed due to COVID-19, a large order of Easter napkins arrived. We certainly didn't want to warehouse them for a year so we decided it would be a good idea to simply share them! Our local Village Bakery, Taylor's Tea Room and Nellie James Gourmet-to-Go offered to make that happen for us. They all took phone-in orders for their Easter specialties and included a package of complimentary holiday napkins from our store with each order!

– Phyllis Kraemer, The Keeping Room, Dundas, ON

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Ben Boschman, The Lakehouse Kelowna, B.C.

We spent the first eight weeks of lockdown completely re-working our store. It's looking better than ever – it is really dialled in now!

My running joke has been that there are so many things I want to do to re-merchandise the store top-to-bottom, but the list was so long we would need to close for at least two months to get it done. Well, guess what happened?

Now, each brand and category is in the proper location with the proper space allocation. So many items have been exposed in a meaningful way, and the store has been cleansed of anything that was collecting dust.

The goal was to make it easier for customers to shop without guidance, and easier for staff to sell. The entire 4,200-square-foot store has been detailed down to the most inconspicuous item. Garlic presses are carefully aligned good, better, and best. It is so clean, the flow is so smooth.

Sue (his wife and business partner) has been focused on her own retro-fit of our furniture store up the street. She came in the other day to check on our progress after two weeks and as she walked around she exclaimed: "I just want to spend money in here", which is hilarious considering she's the owner!

We re-opened in early May and prior to bringing our team, we had a staff meeting to review our safety measures and our new layout. Champagne and orange juice were served.

The team couldn't figure out where we got all of the new inventory because the store looks so full. They were shocked to learn that all we did was re-merchandise the product we had and, in fact, pushed a good amount of dead inventory out the door, which was all donated to charity.

When we re-opened, we were ready and really hit the ground running. As an added bonus, we gave \$10,000 worth of gift cards to our local Mercedes/Lexus dealership. As part of a special summer promotion, every customer who books a service appointment at the dealership receives a \$25 Lakehouse gift card. Hopefully, they'll spend a lot more than that once they see our merchandise!

Terry Raven, Pots & Paraphernalia, Duncan, B.C.

We were fully closed for the first month as no one was coming out. Then we gradually opened for three hours, three days a week. Customers would knock on our door and we would pass them their merchandise. And although sales were nowhere near normal, it kept us from going backwards. Our customers were so appreciative of the service and very happy to see us even if it was through the glass door. We were very appreciative of their support and how nice they all were.

I did donate 500 bags to a local charity. A food bank was asking for plastic bags to hang food on peoples' door knobs when it was delivered.

Ben Boschman spent the first two months of the pandemic completely re-merchandising his beautiful Kelowna store.



We don't offer online shopping any more but we do have a very informative and well-photographed website so all the product displays can be viewed. We did post a lot more on Facebook during the lockdown and the response to this was quite good.

All in all, I feel blessed for my loyal customers and my great staff who did everything they could to help.

Marlene and Richard Koskiniemi, Kitchen Nook, Thunder Bay, ON

It certainly has been a very challenging time for everyone, both personally and for our store. The COVID pandemic will have a long-lasting impression on how we conduct business, and how we live our lives day to day.

To show support to all of the front line workers, we dedicated our front windows to their efforts. We took all of the product out, and replaced it with positive painted messages and placed

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brightly coloured tulip planters throughout. We relayed this message on Facebook and Instagram.

We have definitely utilized our social media platforms and e-commerce site to drum up sales as we offered curbside pick-up. Having already had the tools in place made the effort more seamless. This situation has just reinforced the importance of social media platforms.

Although it's been a trying time, we're confident that the future holds promise. The stronger businesses will survive and thrive. Brighter days are ahead.

Karin Milton, Chef's Edge, Kelowna, B.C.

I opened on alternate days with reduced hours initially, as well as parking lot delivery. In some cases, I sent items through Canada Post. I also donated to the local food bank, and Gospel Mission

I haven't really changed my method of operation, unless you consider increased cleaning and sanitizing, limiting the number of customers in the store at any time, locking the door when I reach capacity, etc. We don't offer online sales, and have always used social media to keep customers informed as to any changes in hours, or new products.

Peter Alyward & Don Moores HOME on water st.

In late March, when it was announced we had to close to walk in traffic, we went into super-high gear preservation mode. With no walk-in traffic, we really thought we were done but we wanted to go down fighting.

We locked the doors but kept the same operating hours – open seven days a week, offering contactless curbside pick-up and home delivery. We posted heavily on social media and prayed the phone would ring. We continued with just one staff member that first week but after that, it was down to just the two of us.

For the next two months we worked harder than we have ever worked in our lives, taking only two days off. We were spending eight hours a day in the store hustling to drum up phone orders that we'd deliver to their doorstep and then

call to let them know it was there, or they'd call when parked in front of our store, pop their trunk and receive their goodies. Many days we'd be delivering until 7:30 at night.

We knew we couldn't possibly keep this up but we had no choice if we wanted to survive. We had to do it smarter. We started offering e-transfers as a payment option to people with no credit card. We added a phone line for curbside pick up only. There was a lot of running around the store on a cordless phone! I became the king of substitution (when we were out of their first choice) and once I had someone's attention on the phone I was making the sale!

We really promoted the benefits and safety of how we were doing curbside pick ups so we could both spend the day in the store and be more efficient. We lessened the days per week delivering and did certain areas of the city on certain days, again to be more efficient. Thankfully people responded.

We posted product that made sense for the current circumstances. We have always sold a lot of bath and body, but suddenly soap was in demand! Our suppliers stepped up and we got product super quick and we kept it moving. Puzzles sold like crazy. Anything self-care and home-related got great response, as did people buying gifts when they couldn't go see the recipient themselves. We used to post on social media five times a week, but we were posting five times a day. Everyone loved sending a little bit of love through HOME on water st. It was exhausting but amazing.

We have definitely grown our customer base during this crisis. People who never heard of us, or shopped with us before, but received a bag of goodies as a surprise on their doorstep have now started shopping with us. Word of mouth got around quickly as to what we were doing. Our personal touch, ease of access, and just making it really simple for people to get same day purchase gratification has let us combat the black cloud of Amazon looming over independent boutiques during this time.

I'm just so glad people have responded and are shopping local and really ap-



On May 12th, the *Toronto Star* did a feature on Alison Fletcher of *Cookery* as she offered customers curbside pick-up.

precipating how hard we are working to keep things as normal as possible in a crazy world of a new abnormal daily. We will continue offering curbside pick up, home delivery even when the stores re-open. Not everyone will be comfortable enough to rush back to coming in contact with people and we want to continue to offer a safe way to shop with us.

We had three of the staff start back with us in late May to help ease the workload. We are truly wiped out, but so happy we have been able to find a new way to do business and survive.

Sharon Yeast, Gifts & Gadgets, Spruce Grove, Alberta

In the early days, there was a HUGE push for people to shop local and support businesses in our own backyard. It has been amazing to see the sharing throughout the our three adjoining communities (Spruce Grove, Stony Plain and Parkland County).

I have had a website for 20 years but didn't spend a lot of time on it. My true focus was building relationships in the community and with the customers that came into our store. I did spend time loading products on our website when COVID hit – we have over 3000 prod-

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ucts on our website now and growing! We offered curbside pick-up and local delivery.

Social media – including Facebook and Instagram – has also been very useful. We used cell phones to take quick pictures of products and text them to customers, which was a bonus. I'm not sure how we would have handled this pandemic 20 years ago without the technology.

We celebrated our 25th anniversary on June 1st. Although I couldn't have the big party like I was planning in my mind before COVID, we have had great support from suppliers providing door prizes and some great deals to offer our customers. We are also in the process of having a video made for social media.

Robbin Lich, Kitchen Therapy, Surrey, B.C.

We shut down completely for two entire weeks in mid-March and it was very difficult. Brent (Robbin's partner and co-owner) became very depressed and went into a tailspin. He was worried and stressed about our future and had a very difficult time dealing with it all.

I decided it was a good time to tackle the store's inventory so I went in and started it, working every day. I finished 70-80% of it and then hired someone to finish it off.

In April we started to open on a limited basis, offering curbside pick-up, and we really ramped up our website. We had been working on moving to more online sales when the virus hit so now we had to speed it up. But the fact is, we have very high overhead whether or not we're open. You have to sell a lot of spatulas online to cover the cost of our rent!

There is also the issue of inventory. As a small store we only carried about a half dozen of each item and once they were sold, it's impossible to restock so the customer would turn to a chain store. Plus, we have many customers who shop on a regular basis for items like coffee. How can we serve them?

Staying in touch by social media is not as easy or efficient as you think, plus it's time-consuming and revenue neutral.

The most stressful part of it all is wondering when this is going to end? And there is so much we have to do in terms of sanitization as we reopen, it's really overwhelming. We've had to rearrange the interior furniture, and remerchandise the products for social distancing, plus offer sanitizer to everyone who enters and we all wear masks at all times.

On the bright side, our reopening day was stellar. The response has been truly heartwarming, I couldn't ask for better customers. They are praising us so much it's embarrassing!

My big fear now, especially without any industry trade shows, is what will happen when everyone's inventory runs out? There is a backlog of containers waiting in China, when will retailers get products?

Brent and I are both exhausted, I've taken one day off in seven weeks. And now we're worried about bringing our 15 employees back. For many, the store has been their livelihood. Because we can only offer reduced hours, they must decide if it makes more sense for them to stay on unemployment insurance, which is probably more lucrative. ■

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Take time to breathe

One retailer's experience during the early days of the coronavirus

by Jenny Otsuka, Owner, Zest Kitchen Shop, Picton, Ontario
Photos by Johnny C.Y. Lam

I wake up in the mornings with shortness of breath. I breathe in, hold it, count to four and exhale. I am able to fend them off – the panic attacks – which have crept back into my life in the days following the temporary closure of my business.

When the WHO identified the coronavirus as a pandemic and our Prime Minister urged Canadians around the world to come home, I knew the time was near. On March 16th, out of an abundance of concern for our community, our staff and our families, my husband Kyle and I decided to temporarily close our kitchenware store.

Our store was bursting at the seams with spring inventory. We were ramping up employee hours and training sessions to get ready for our busy season. We were implementing a new POS system, building new fixtures and re-designing sections of the store. We put all of our plans on hold and told our staff that we weren't sure when we might bring them back to work.

How were we going to keep things afloat during a shutdown of an indeterminate length of time?

I felt uneasy when our business was categorized as "non-essential". When you've invested so much of yourselves

in it, and livelihoods are dependent on it, doesn't your business feel essential?

A week after we closed, we had to say a tearful goodbye to our family dog, a well-mannered 18-year-old yorkie-poo named Carter. He was our constant companion and customers enjoyed being greeted by his happy spirit. We were heartbroken.

It took us some time before we were able to be productive. I think we were in shock. After a couple weeks of anxiously watching the news, constantly urging our loved ones to stay home, taking care of ROEs and applying for government programs, we decided it was time to reconnect with our customers and bring some life back into our business.

I forwarded all calls to my cellphone so customers could reach me. Everyone was isolating at home so we decided to get more active on social media. Though we're both camera-shy people, we even posted a few "how to" videos (ie. how to sharpen your knives at home). Customers called to see if "we had that one thing" they were looking for. Many needed proving baskets, bench scrapers and lames for their sourdough bread adventures.

It's been a difficult time for our business and for us personally. And yet, we feel grateful.

We are incredibly grateful to all the people who are working to keep our pantries full and our families healthy. We were in the fortunate position to be able to isolate securely in our homes because of them.

We are grateful for curbside pick-up, for video calls with loved ones and for Netflix. For living in Canada, especially



Despite everything they've endured, Jenny and Kyle Otsuka remain very grateful.

in our beautiful corner of the world.

A few weeks into the shutdown, we started dropping off orders on customers' porches two days a week in Prince Edward County. It has been heartwarming to hear their voices over the phone, seeing their faces via video call, and peering out of their windows. And while we have been physically distancing, we feel more connected to our customers than ever.

We are so grateful to them. Our customers have made us feel essential.

And that webstore that didn't exist before the pandemic is now up and running.

While each day seems to bring new challenges, I hold onto the things that remain unchanging. The love I have for my family, taking time to enjoy the natural world, and the simple pleasure of cooking. And as restrictions open, continuing to do what feels right for my family and my business. Most importantly, taking care of my mental health, and seeking advice, thankfully available by video call. ■



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Balancing act

Despite the fear and the uncertainty, for some, the pandemic provided a rare and much-needed opportunity to pause and reflect on what's really important in life

By Jogi Sudnik, owner, Jolanta Interiors and Jogi's Imports

To say 2020 has been 'interesting' so far would be an understatement. Many words flow into my mind to describe the first two quarters of this year and this decade: unbelievable, uncomfortable, heart-wrenching, heavy, challenging, difficult... the list goes on and on. However, along with so many seemingly negative connotations, there has also been an abundance of eye-opening, uplifting, positive experiences that have opened my eyes to new opportunities and a different approach to my every day life – something I was "too busy" to notice before COVID-19.

The last 10 years have been, at times, extremely rewarding but also very challenging and stressful, both personally and professionally. To provide some background about myself and my career in the retail world: I was born and raised in Toronto's west end. My family emigrated from Poland in the 1960s, with my grandparents arriving first, followed by their four children nearly five years later.

They all worked hard, day and night, cleaning churches and businesses, as well as cooking for a few people and any other odd jobs they could find to build a new life in Canada. My parents separated when I was two, but both were a big influence on my life, as were my grandparents, aunts and uncles. I would say that I was definitely raised by a "village" and not an individual!

My mom, Jolanta, was one of the warmest, kindest, most energetic people on this earth who had a passion for modern art and design. She loved working "the front of the house" at my



Working seven days a week as both a retailer and a supplier took its toll on Jogi Sudnik's personal life. The lockdown gave her the gift of time to re-examine her choices and she says it was life-changing.

grandparents' bakery/deli in Bloor West Village in the late '60s and early '70s, while she was a student at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute.

After graduating from the Interior Design program, she worked at Eaton Design Group for a few years, but her love of retail and beautiful things was so great that she decided to embark on the

adventure of opening Jolanta Interiors in 1975. This is where my story begins.

My brave, entrepreneurial mother opened her Bloor Street store in June 1975, with a 3-month-old in tow. I literally grew up in RETAIL. Customers today still reminisce about how they remember me in a carrier on the counter or walking around the store, barely two feet tall, mimicking the adults around me and walking up to people saying "Can I help you?"

I guess a lifetime of training and being led by example paid off. When my mom was diagnosed with a terminal cancer in 2010, I was able to pick up the pieces and handle all day-to-day dealings of the store, from payroll and bill payments to inventory and order control, hiring, training and managing an incredibly tight-knit team of employees that I would call my "work family". Without them I would not be here today.

It was at this time that I decided to start up a second business, Jogi's Import. It was initially simply an off-shoot of Jolanta Interiors allowing us to separate our small 'side-business' of selling a wonderful product called Universal Stone from Germany, to many of our retail friends in the industry with stores similar to ours across Canada.

We had only a handful of wholesale accounts at the beginning and one wonderful rep in Southwestern Ontario, Harvey Geiger, who was helping us grow our customer base.

To think that 10 years later I would be looking back at how I managed two full-time businesses, juggled four kids,

Retail Insight

worked 20 or more trade and consumer shows per year – it is quite hard to believe that both businesses thrived and survived (and I’m still standing)!

Now, here we are in 2020. Jump forward from January to June of this year, and I am proud to say that we have survived yet another hurdle – the novel coronavirus. I experienced tremendous anguish having to close Jolanta Interiors indefinitely and lay off 14 people from our two businesses as we headed into unknown territory. It was gut-wrenching and heart-breaking, to say the least.

There were many quiet days and moments where I would sit at my computer in our brand-new office in Etobicoke – yes, we had just moved into a spacious new warehouse at the beginning of March – zombie-like. And there were fleeting moments when I felt like crying. But there was also this intense serenity and peace in the silence of this new, brightly lit space with sunlight streaming in through windows and skylights where everything was so new, fresh and neatly organized.

For the first time in maybe 15 years, I started regaining clarity and focus, breathing more deeply, examining my life, my choices (past, present and future), and the people surrounding me. It’s incredible how ‘light’ I began to feel during such a ‘heavy’ crisis.

There were so many unknowns facing me: my businesses, my kids, my partner, my extended family, my work family. Yet knots in my neck that had been part of my daily existence and something I ignored, started to loosen. Tasks and “To Do” lists that were never-ending and not always completed started getting checked off and tidied up.

I started going home for dinner at 5 p.m. daily, something I had rarely done in the past decade. My kids had been used to take-out five days a week, dinners at 7:30 or 8:00 p.m., or later, and an exhausted mother who would often fall asleep on the couch with all lights on, in clothes and makeup.

For so long I felt that I “had to” do everything that I was doing – all the shows, working seven days a week,



often 12-14 hours a day. I thought I was leading by example. I now realize that I was spinning my wheels sometimes, short on focus, sometimes micro-managing too many detailed projects and people at once.

I wasn’t giving myself a chance to take a deep breath, relax a little and enjoy a movie night with my family or sit still and engulf myself in a good book on a Sunday afternoon.

The pressure and guilt I put on myself to constantly exceed expectations – mostly my own – and achieve more and more was all-consuming. I honestly have to say that I am grateful that this pandemic brought my world to a bit of a halt, temporarily. It made it possible, even mandatory, to reconnect with the people and things around me. I have done puzzles, danced in my pajamas to loud music, sang off key and cooked more meals in the last 10 weeks than I have in the past 10 years!

I am happy both businesses made it through this difficult time and thankful that our landlord has been willing to work with us to manage this situation so we can all end up with a positive outcome. Jogi’s Import continued to work, albeit with a ‘skeleton-crew’, continuing to get orders out to the businesses that counted on us to supply them with cleaning products and household accessories they rely on.

Jolanta Interiors was also gently nudged into the 21st century as I

learned more about Facebook and Instagram, connected more personally (even though it was often virtually) with many customers who continued to support us, as their local small business.

I have reevaluated the need to be open seven days a week and offering long hours, just to keep up with malls and online businesses. It has been so rewarding being back at the store more often, reconnecting with our loyal, local customers and having meaningful conversations with people about more than just the item they are buying or what we are trying to sell to them.

We have all been given the gift of time, to reflect, re-focus, review, re-evaluate, reimagine and reinvent ourselves right now. My children will remember COVID-19 and 2020 as the year mommy became more present, more fun.

This is not to say I am not still driven and goal-oriented. I am and always be as this is my nature. But I actually believe I will become even more successful, and have greater goals, now that I can see the bigger picture ahead of me where both businesses are concerned.

This gift of time has been life-changing. It is my hope that both businesses will continue to evolve into better versions of what they were as the future unfolds ahead of us. Everything happens for a reason. What we do with it and how we approach it is up to us. Embrace what you are presented with and enjoy the process. ■

Coffee & Tea

The Canadian coffee market

By Pam Wood, Director, Home, The NPD Group

Canadians love coffee! This can be seen by looking at the importance of coffee to the Food Service channel – with just over 2.5 billion servings of coffee occurring in the Canadian foodservice market last year.

You can also see this dedication to coffee in the size of the coffee appliance market in Canada. Category dollar sales were just over \$180 million in 2019, which makes coffeemakers and espresso machines the largest kitchen appliance category tracked by The NPD Group. This category is also one of the strongest growth categories year over year, with dollar sales growing at +8% in 2019 (compared to +4% growth for all of kitchen appliances).

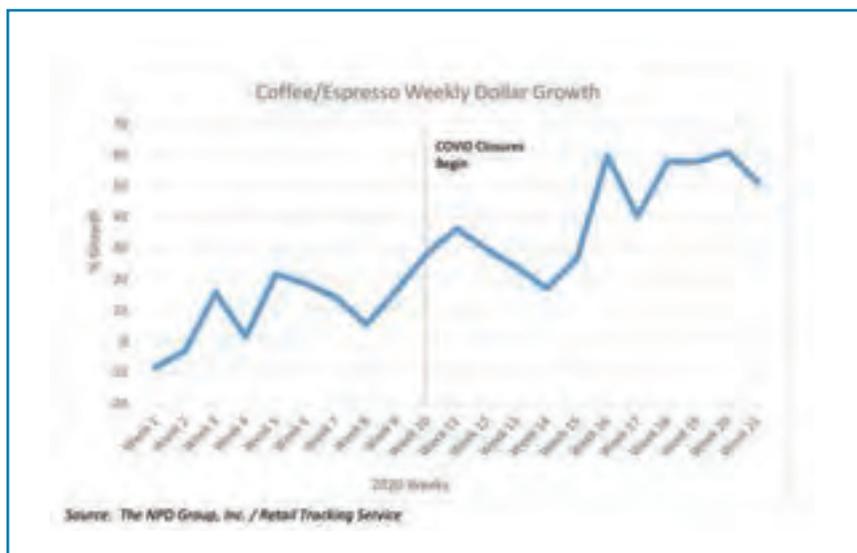
The need for our daily caffeine has been even more pronounced during the last few months as we have managed through this pandemic. According to Statistics Canada, there were approximately 3.3 million Canadians in April who worked from home that usually work in another location. With consumers sheltering and working at home, and with foodservice outlets closed, Canadians rushed to purchase new appliances to meet their caffeine requirements. Not surprisingly coffee/espressomakers was one of the first categories in small appliances to experience growth during the pandemic as consumers replaced out of home consumption in their own kitchens.

On average, consumers are paying \$94 for a new coffee/espresso machine. However, consumers are investing at every price point, with the strongest growth in the category seen in machines over \$300, which YTD experienced dollar sales growth of more than +50% (more than double the growth rate of the overall category). Despite increasing financial pressure on Canadians with the current economic uncertainty, clearly Canadians consider coffee as an essential part of their day, and are willing to invest in appliances to improve their lives.

Growth has been consistently strong throughout the weeks post lockdown, as can be seen in the attached chart, which depicts weekly growth rates for the coffee category. Growth is not exclusive to one specific coffee segment, as we have seen increases across all types of coffee appliances with very strong growth in espresso machines, single serve brewing systems, coffee grinders, and even with milk frothers, cold brewers and manual coffee presses. This clearly shows that Canadians are sophisticated coffee drinkers, and have purchased appliances to make their own preferred coffee house beverage while at home.



The Colombia drip cup coffeemaker from **Intercontinental Mercantile**, above, saves money on paper filters. The fine 18/8 stainless steel double mesh of the pour-over coffee cone allows for a gentler extraction while letting the perfect amount of coffee drip through the filter. It's reusable, eco-friendly and very easy to clean. Simply rinse with water by hand or put it in the dishwasher. Also new from Intercontinental is this Double Double Latte set, below. The glasses are made of lightweight borosilicate glass and mouth-blown together to create a unique glass-in-glass effect. The result is a vacuum layer of thermal insulation that keeps hot drinks hot and easy to handle.



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- Illuminated buttons
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Coffee & Tea



The most successful automatic coffee machine in **JURA**'s history, the JURA E8 now offers an even greater variety of coffee beverages. It is now available in a pristine, crisp, clean Piano White version, shown left, that adds sophistication and elegance to any kitchen countertop. It features a modern TFT display that makes operation incredibly simple. It can prepare up to 16 different specialties at the touch of a button and has a professional-quality fine foam frother.



A new 5-cup Cold Brew coffeemaker from **Ricardo**, above, makes a smooth cup of hot or iced coffee with no bitterness and low acidity. The carafe is made of durable borosilicate glass and comes with a stainless steel filter that won't transfer unwanted taste. The silicone seal in the airtight lid locks in flavour.



Just like a cafe, the Bambino Plus espresso machine does not compromise on the four key elements for true restaurant-quality coffee. Part of the new Luxe collection of kitchen appliances from **Breville**, the Bambino Plus, above, uses a 54mm portafilter with 19 grams for full flavour and an automatic steam wand for milk texturing that delivers true hands-free microfoam at the right temperature. With a 3-second heat-up time from a cold start, along with instantaneous transition from extraction to steam, users can make a coffee faster than ever!



The Luxe line also includes this Smart Kettle, left. With a 7-cup capacity, this luxury kettle has a soft open life that slowly releases the steam. Pre-programmed and customizable one-touch functionalities create ideal brewing conditions for black, green, white or oolong teas and French press coffee. The one-touch function keeps water warm for 20 minutes and can be activated before, during, or on completion of the water heating cycle. (A toaster completes the Luxe countertop collection.)



This Pour Over coffee filter from Ricardo makes one or two cups of coffee in one brewing. The ultra fine double mesh filter prevents ground coffee from passing through. A cost-effective alternative to traditional paper filters, it has a removable base so it can be used over mugs.

Coffee & Tea



The PERK is the perfect portable container for hot and cold brewed coffee, tea and fruit infused cold drinks. It is designed for one-handed use, with a push button that opens the top, and a lock to keep your drink container leak-free. Available in 473 ml (16 oz) and 591 ml (20 oz) from **Fenigo**.



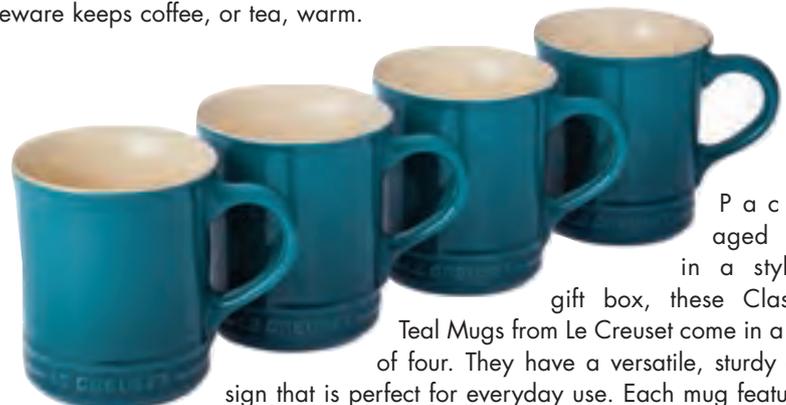
The Woods Heritage mug from **Danica** is designed for the Canadian cottage enthusiast. This enamel-inspired mug with contrasting rim is just asking to be sipped from. It features silhouettes of evergreen trees in attractive watercolour textures.



Danisco is introducing two new mugs to the Cafe Culture collection, left. The rustic acacia wood lid and wire handle gives an artisanal feel to this new collection of double walled coffee mugs. The lid doubles as a coaster and the 450-ml capacity is perfectly designed to enjoy a cup of freshly ground coffee. The mugs are available in black or stainless steel.



The Teal French Press from **Le Creuset** prepares coffee to be savored. Coarsely ground coffee beans are steeped in boiling water, and then filtered away by plunging the stainless steel mesh sieve through the press. Direct contact between beans and water means a stronger flavour. The heat-retaining stoneware keeps coffee, or tea, warm.



Packaged in a stylish gift box, these Classic Teal Mugs from Le Creuset come in a set of four. They have a versatile, sturdy design that is perfect for everyday use. Each mug features the company's embossed lettering and rings around the base. They're ideal for soup and desserts as well as coffee.

Coffee & Tea



The new Hamilton Beach FlexBrew dual coffeemaker with milk frother, above, lets consumers create creamy, frothy barista quality coffees at home. It can brew coffee using K-pods or ground coffee. The frother works while the coffee is brewing in just two minutes. There is no need for a separate machine. The unit has the flexibility to make either iced or hot coffee. It can fit a travel mug up to seven inches tall.

The **Hamilton Beach** 5-cup coffeemaker with glass carafe, right, has all the features of a full size unit. Compact enough to fit under any counter, it offers a front-fill water reservoir and swing-out brew basket that makes it easy to fill and clean. At the other end of the spectrum, Hamilton Beach has introduced a 12-cup compact programmable coffeemaker, below. It also fits easily into any compact space and offers easy-touch programming that can set coffee 24 hours ahead. Brew strength can be customized and it automatically shuts off after two hours.



Consumers can now bring the refreshing taste of cold brew into their own homes with this new iced coffeemaker from **Salton**, left. With a unique double-basket design, this unit is easy to use with just two steps: brew with the filtered brew basket and chill with the ice basket. The sleek stainless steel design, BPA-free 720ml (24-ounce.) water jug, and LCD display create an attractive countertop appliance perfect for all at-home baristas. It also features a one-touch operation and a countdown function. The new Salton 2-in-1 Single Serve coffeemaker, right, was created to cater to a busy, on-the-go

lifestyle. It can brew directly into your mug or travel mug to save time and money. The reusable nylon mesh filter is removable for easy cleaning but can also be swapped out for a universal K-Cup compatible filter for capsules.



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*Compared to fat content of chicken and pork versus low fat fryers

*Source: Euromonitor International Ltd. Low fat fryers by per capita fryers category definition, retail volume sales 2013 and 2014

Coffee & Tea



The Gefu Antonio milk frother, above, has an innovative spinning mechanism that turns both warm and cold milk into a creamy froth. The borosilicate glass container has a pouring spout integrated in the lid.

Gefu's reusable capsules for the Original Nespresso machine are a step towards avoiding unnecessary plastics. Available from **David Shaw**, the capsule program consists of a starter kit complete with two stainless steel capsules, filling funnel, coffee scoop, tamper, seals and brush.



The Salam teapot, created in 1953, is De-grenne's flagship product. Distributed by **Intercontinental**, the teapot's body is lined by a felt sleeve to keep tea at optimum temperature for over two hours. The removable filter prevents any bitter taste. It features a padded stainless steel cover.



Calypso enamel on steel whistling kettles from **David Shaw** come in a variety of vivid colors, with practical black enamel on the interior. The fold-down handle makes for easy filling and cleaning. The 2.2 quart kettle also has a heat-resistant glass lid.

Grosche recently debuted the Milano Steel Stovetop Espresso Maker, an updated version of the original Milano model. The new stainless steel version comes in a 6-cup and 10-cup size and features a certified Italian safety valve. It is designed for use at home, in the office, or while camping. The Milano is constructed from food-safe aluminum and has a non-toxic silicone gasket seal. It comes in a variety of sizes and stylish colors, said the company. In addition, the Milano features a burn guard on the grip to protect fingers from touching hot surfaces while the Italian certified safety valve prevents internal pressure from increasing to a dangerous point.



The Crisp Tea Storage Organizer from **iDesign** is the perfect solution for keeping tea bags and accessories. The stackable design features a sliding drawer that allows for convenient access when used on its own, or it can be stacked with multiple bins. It's made of BPA-free clear, food-safe plastic and can be easily hand-washed with soap and water.



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Coffee & Tea



This sleek cordless glass dome kettle from **Hamilton Beach** rapidly boils up to 1.7 litres of water while a soft blue light illuminates the contents. It features auto shut-off with boil-dry protection, a built-in mesh filter, cord wrap and a wide opening for easy cleaning.

This compact kettle from **Salton**, below, has a unique foldable handle and wind-up power cord for easy storing and travelling. It features 1000 watts of power with a 600 ml capacity which means water will boil in minutes. It has a full stainless steel interior, concealed heating element and a removable lid that is easy to fill.



The **Ricardo** 1.7-litre preprogrammed electric kettle has a stainless steel infuser and LED lit control panel, above. It steeps at a precise temperature for optimal taste. The warm setting maintains water temperature for 60 minutes. It can be used without the infuser thanks to the locking lid feature which prevents over steeping. Ricardo's insulated cork cup, left, is perfect to transport hot tea!



Le Creuset offers a teapot and a tea kettle as part of the Teal collection. The Grand teapot, below left, has a large, easy grip handle that remains cold to the touch for effortless lifting and pouring. The Classic whistling kettle, below right, is suitable for all heat sources, including induction. It's crafted from premium carbon steel and finished with a vibrant, chip-resistant porcelain enamel. Useful for preparing French press coffee, oatmeal and more, it's at home in both traditional and contemporary kitchens.



Bialetti Italy recently partnered with Oceana, an international advocacy organization dedicated to protecting the ecosystems of the world's oceans with campaigns to reduce pollution from single-use plastics. Bialetti is donating to Oceana while also highlighting the sustainability of its iconic Moka Express stovetop espresso maker in a social media campaign. The only waste it produces is biodegradable and 100% compostable. As part of the social media campaign, consumers are encouraged to follow and use the hashtag #wakeupfortheoceans. Additionally, Bialetti showed its commitment to the cause by replacing all the plastic bags that wrap Moka Express with 100% recyclable paper wrappers.

The Gala Tea For Me set from **Danica** has a detailed embossed surface that is a delight. This adorable set is made from durable stoneware and each set has a removable lid that serves as a cup when turned upside down.



Consumers in Canada Are Caffeinating at Home

Consumers in Canada love coffee, and they have adapted to their new stay-at-home reality by indulging in coffee appliances for their kitchens. **Here's a look at the data ...**

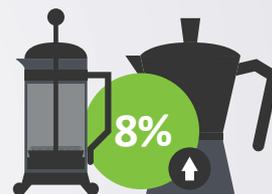


Coffee continues to be the most popular menu item

in Canadian foodservice with just over 2.5B servings last year.

Source: The NPD Group/CREST®, 12 ME December 2019

Coffee/espresso makers, one of the fastest-growing appliance categories tracked by NPD in 2019, grew by +8% last year.



That trend escalated in recent months, when Canadians were unable to visit their local coffee houses, and they fulfilled their coffee needs at home. YTD, coffee dollar sales have increased by +21%. Unit sales have increased by +9%.

What type of machines are consumers selecting?

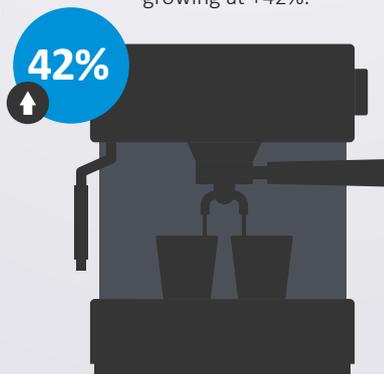
Single serve brewing systems

account for 47% of dollars, growing at +21%.



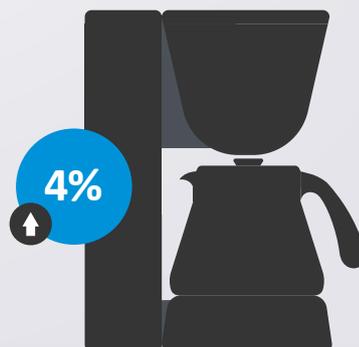
Espresso makers

represent 28% of dollars, growing at +42%.



Coffeemakers

represent 25% of dollars, growing at +4%.



Understand both sides of Canadian consumers' coffee habits, at-home consumption, and what's happening in foodservice. With reliable data and expert insight, you can determine the size of your opportunities, react quickly to changing market conditions, and get a clear view of consumer preferences.

Source: The NPD Group/Retail Tracking Service, 4 ME April 2020

Get more insights like this. Visit npdgroup.ca or email chris.kastein@npd.com.



Bar necessities

What's new in glassware, barware & home entertaining

As healthy living continues to trend upward, the movement has turned from healthy food choices to those of beverages as well. Consumers are looking to consume less alcohol but still want to be able to enjoy the social aspect that drinking allows for.

While mocktails and low-ABV style beverages have been around for years, there is now an increased emphasis on the creation of these drinks, driven by the craft cocktail movement. Consumers will be looking for high-quality beverages that don't sacrifice on taste. And consumers are not only ordering them out, they are also making them at home. According to FONA International, a company dedicated to creating and producing flavours for many of the largest food, beverage, and nutritional companies in the world, this movement will continue to gain popularity through 2020.

In a new insights report, the company notes that there has been a behavioral shift for consumers, especially Millennials, towards drinking less alcohol or eliminating it all together, and it is becoming an everyday lifestyle choice. The study noted that with an increased focus on decreasing the amount of sugar one is taking in, alcohol consumption is often the first thing to get eliminated. It is also being pushed by those consumers who are not only watching their waistline, but also their budget.

This trend has allowed beer, wine and spirits companies to roll out new products poised to fill the void. And, if companies have not yet created products for this niche, they soon will be. According to the study, low and no alcohol products currently account for only 0.5% of the total U.S. beverage alcohol market, but they are growing rapidly. Ready-to-drink products in the category are forecasted to grow 39% per year right through 2022.

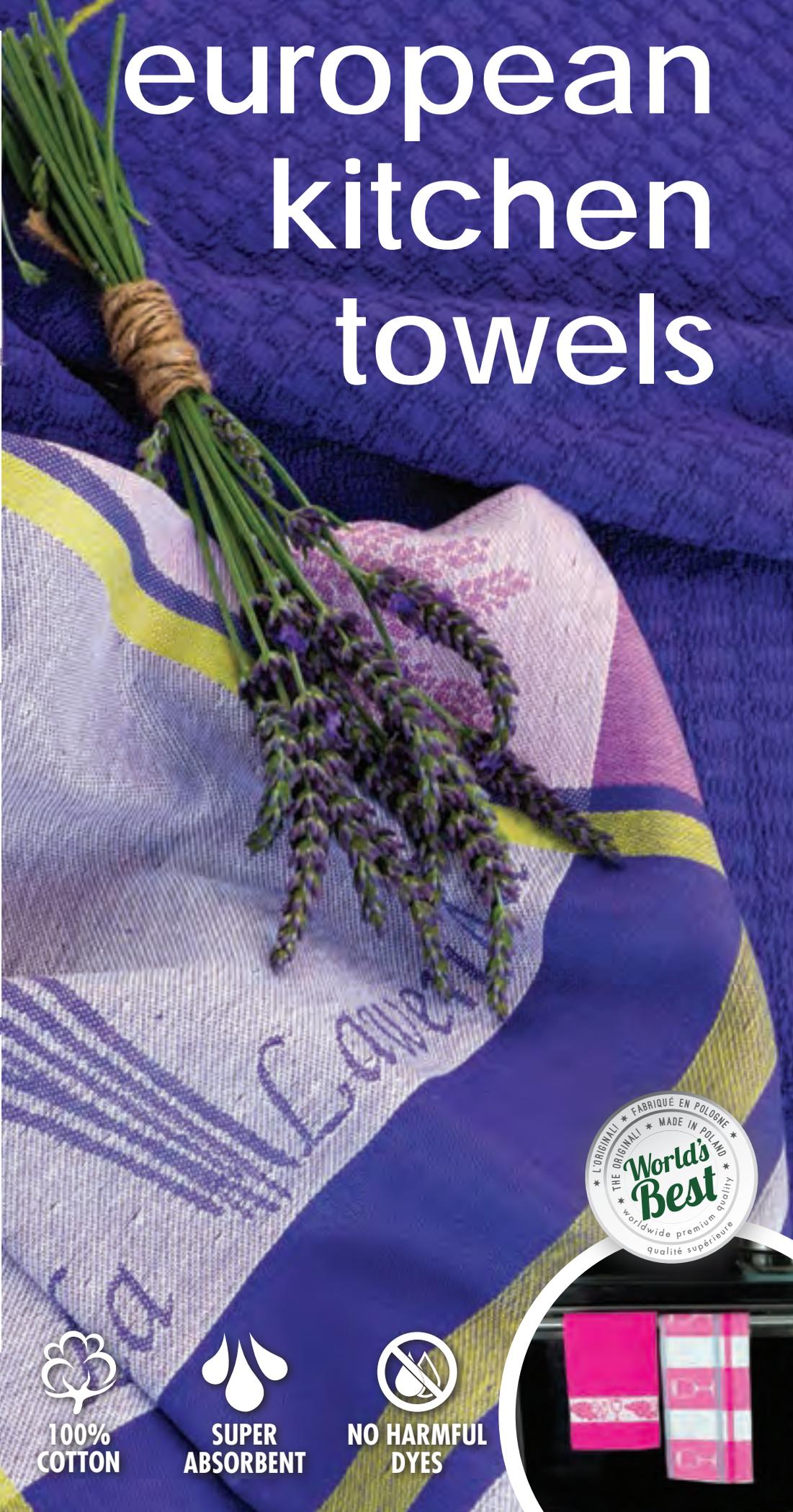


Cuisivin is letting Canadians show their civic pride with city skylines on lead-free crystal beer glasses, left. Each one comes in an eye-catching colour gift tube. Also new is the cartography collection, below. Designed and manufactured in Canada, each lead-free crystal whiskey glass features a full wrap-around of Canadian cities.



This seven-piece Final Touch tequila tasting set from **Product Specialties** comes with four shot vessels made of Himalayan salt. The lift-up wood cutting board is designed to reveal slots that hold bottles and decanters, including the Final Touch Agave tequila decanter (not included). The removable slate cutting board is ideal for cutting limes, while the ceramic lime dish holds lime wedges after cutting. PSI also recently introduced the new Conundrum Aerator, designed for wine decanters. According to the company, the new aerator oxygenates wine as soon as it is inserted into the decanter. This mitigates waiting time for wine to breathe after it is opened. With the aerator, the wine can be poured and served right away.

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Bar necessities

The “Love the Wine” soak up coaster set from **Danica/Now Designs** makes the perfect hostess gift. Made from a super absorbent ceramic, these coasters will soak up any condensation, leaving the mug or glass drip-free. The set of four coasters comes packaged in an attractive gift box.



The Taproom collection by Taylor’s Eye Witness, above, features stylish, affordable accessories for the modern home bar. The line includes cocktail shakers in stainless steel, glass and gold, and drinking straws in assorted styles from straight and bent to stainless and iridescent. Available from **David Shaw**.

Also from David Shaw, the Gefu FUTURE straw storage basket, below, provides a safe place to store reusable glass and stainless steel straws and to safely go through the dishwasher cycle. The basket will hold 25 straws and is BPA-free.



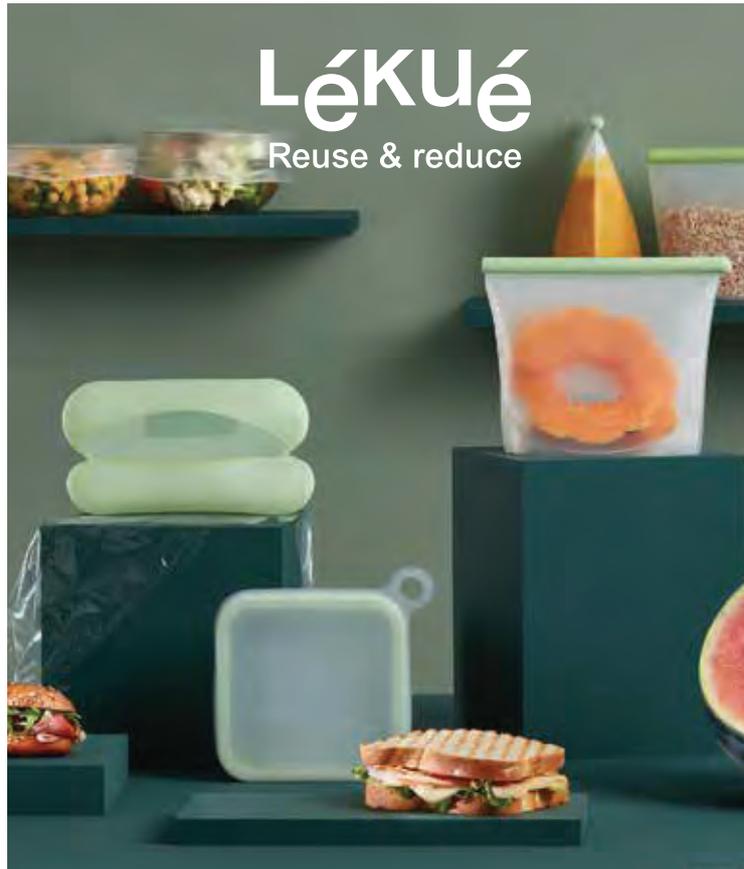
LSA offers a wide assortment of drinkware and stemware lines, including two distinctive flute sets for Prosecco. New to the range this year is the Wicker collection, shown right. The mouthblown drinkware combines contemporary shapes with a distinctive band of woven texture inspired by wicker. It’s available in clear and taupe from David Shaw.



Made of polished black marble with a vibrant gold finish, the Natural Living serving board from **DanESCO** would be welcome at any party. (A matching set of three cheese knives is sold separately.) Naturally cool to the touch, marble transfers heat away from cheeses and meats to keep food fresh.



S’well hydration bottles from Danesco come in a variety of stylish colours and patterns. Each offers triple-layered, vacuum insulated technology to chill drinks for 24 hours. The company is committed to being a leader in sustainable living worldwide.



Showcasing our new collections & promotions by appointment & or virtual appointments
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Bar necessities



The **VacuVin** Active Cooling Carafe, above, chills drinks in minutes without ice. The tabletop cooler incorporates two active cooling elements. Store the cooling elements in the freezer and insert them into the carafe base. Drinks will be cooled in minutes and remain that way for hours. The lid is included.

Intercontinental Mercantile offers a line of Glencairn Scotch and Whiskey Footed glasses. The unique shape has been crafted to enhance the enjoyment of single malts and aged blends. The mouth is tapered into a wide bowl and the solid base fits easily in the hand.



Also new from InterContinental is the Rock & Roll 8-piece whiskey set, above. The set includes a glass decanter, two lead-free whiskey glasses, two large ice chilling balls, two locking ice molds and stainless steel ice tongs. The locking molds have a non-slip base for easy and hygienic storage in the freezer.



Ricardo is launching a new double wall glass set with an attractive cork base. Made of durable borosilicate glass, these sturdy double wall glasses maintain beverages, hot or cold, longer. The cork base keeps the glass cool to the touch when filled with hot liquid. Each glass has a 10-ounce capacity.



Abbott is introducing this elegant glossy rectangle tray, above. Crafted from durable PVC with a high-quality lacquer finish with a chic gold pattern. This black serving tray will help make every occasion special. Other colours also available.



Abbott also offers several fun bar accessories. This majestic Stag's Head bottle stopper, left, is rafted out of metal. The distinctive silver stag's head features lots of rich texture and detail. This silver-plated alloy bottle opener, right, is shaped like a smiling polar bear, complete with jaunty red-and-white striped scarf. Other polar bear-themed accessories are also available in the collection.



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Bringing the world home

When two graphic designers working in the surf industry started travelling together, their eyes were drawn to products that are unusual and seldom seen.

Meet Australian *gia* Global Honorees, Danny and Tara Solberg, owners of *Few & Far*.

By Michelle Hespe

Precious objects with stories inextricably woven into their fabric, structure, composition and past, products that are *Few & Far* between. This is what Australian couple Danny and Tara Solberg have built the foundations of their thriving retail and interior design business upon, and it was the inspiration for the company name. Basically, they collect and curate beautiful, meaningful pieces to enhance people's homes and lives.

Tara and Danny both trained as graphic designers and met when they were working in the surf industry for a well-established brand. They travelled overseas twice a year to source products and stay ahead of trends, and often while out and about Tara would drag Danny into interiors and collectible stores. Her passion had always been interior decorating.

"We were in Melrose, California, at the beginning of one of our trips, and we discovered the most amazing warehouse-style store full of antiques and artifacts from around the world – Asia, Morocco, Africa, India, Thailand, Indonesia as well as industrial pieces from the USA and elsewhere," explains Tara with obvious excitement in her voice. "The owner was sitting behind a desk at the back of the store, working on his laptop, and Danny said to me, 'I want to be him.' And so we began dreaming and planning the concept of *Few & Far*."

The catch-phrase for *Few & Far* – "*Bringing the World Home*" – is as laden with meaning and warmth as the store's

name, perfectly reflecting the business's welcoming, cozy and richly layered atmosphere where the world's many cultures take centre stage.

"Our store name is essentially what

we do," says Tara. "We travel the world looking for inspirational pieces that tell stories of different cultures that we can mix with modern pieces to create timeless interiors. We also love learning



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Global Honouree

about different cultures and traditions and seek out individual pieces with soul that tell a story or spark a question.”

The couple believe that the most captivating and interesting interiors are made up of a collection of pieces that have been added through time. “It takes time to create a thoughtful interior, and the way you feel is noticeably different when you walk into a room decorated with collected pieces – each with stories to tell – compared to a room with a package deal of matching furniture.”

Tara and Danny confess that the hunt for the perfect space for *Few & Far* was a very difficult process. “We are obviously not a shopping mall type experience with straight edges,” Tara explains.

“We wanted old bones in our building with old concrete slabs or old floorboards, timber beams and vintage patinas. These things can’t be reproduced and are a big ingredient in our recipe. We were so lucky with our store’s location – it was an old building that had four stores within it. Over time we presume layers were added with walls to create individual spaces, but when we peeled it all away and exposed the large space, which had fantastic natural light (that also cannot be reproduced!), it became the perfect space for us.”

Growing up, Tara loved to redesign and decorate her bedroom and has never let go of her passion for interior decorating. Her parents always owned their own businesses and her dad is a builder and self-confessed hoarder of building materials and aged timbers. He did the entire renovation on *Few & Far*’s building, and the store fit-out.

“My Dad being a builder had a big influence on my love for interiors, architecture and raw materials,” says Tara. “He understands exactly how I like things to be finished and how they should look, and he makes sure the details are finished to a high standard. I can show him an image or an example of the look I am trying to achieve and off he goes to make it happen, even if it means scouring nearby farms or properties for falling down sheds or old houses being demolished to source the timber for a feature wall.”

Danny and Tara are clearly sentimental, and this goes a long way to enhancing that personal touch and also assists in the buying process.

“Whenever we unpack a container of furniture, we are immediately transported back to the warehouse in India or China where we chose those pieces just from scent alone,” says Tara. “And when we find amazing pieces, I instantly envision an interior that they could

inhabit. I start dreaming about the kind of space that would do them justice – which is when I experience that ‘must buy’ moment!”

With so many memories linked to such an enormous array of incredible pieces, it’s hard for the couple to decide on a favorite object discovered during their travels. However, there is one distinct line that symbolizes their innovative, colourful approach to retail.





"We are always drawn to Herki Tribal rugs – everything about the Herki's patterns, styles and textures resonates with us," explains Danny. "They often have very organic colours mixed with bright almost clashing fluorescents. The patterns are also a little more unpredictable and usually have more geometric motifs than most carpets."

Becoming a *gia* Global Honoree shone a light on the work that Tara and Danny have been doing, and although COVID-19 has greatly affected them, they've realized that the future is bright – perhaps even brighter on the other side of the crisis.

The big night of the live-streamed *gia* awards (which was at 1 am for Australians) came after a tough day at work while home schooling and juggling their three children, and so Tara and Danny were both exhausted. "We set our alarms and woke up bleary-eyed to watch, hoping that no-one could see us in our pajamas," Tara says with a laugh. "When *Few & Far* was announced as one of the six Global Honorees I did a little happy dance and we silently high-fived. I couldn't get back to sleep after the announcement, and we also couldn't help but feel a bit bummed that we weren't popping champagne and celebrating in Chicago!"

But the sense of accomplishment was enough of a reward for Tara and Danny, and they couldn't be prouder of how far they have come. "Winning the title of Global Honoree is SO exciting and extremely gratifying," says Tara. "We absolutely love and believe in what we do and to be rewarded for our passion, hard work and effort is exhilarating. To think that

Tara's father, a builder who collects aged timber and shares her love of raw materials, helped renovate and redesign the store.

what started out as a little store on the South Coast of NSW will now be recognized on a global scale is completely mind-blowing."

Sponsored and organized by The Inspired Home Show and the International Housewares Association (IHA), *gia* is the world's leading awards program honouring overall excellence, business innovation and creative merchandising in homegoods retailing. For more information about the *gia* retail program, the co-sponsors, or participating in *gia*, contact Piritta Törrö at piritta.torro@inspiredconnection.fi.

For information about The Inspired Home Show and to pre-register for the 2021 Show, taking place in Chicago March 13 to 16, 2021, please visit TheInspiredHomeShow.com.

DEALING WITH COVID-19

Like all retailers, the global pandemic has definitely affected Few & Far. After having their best year since opening, Tara and Danny suddenly had to put their physical store on hold and focus on selling online, while at the same time shifting their attention to the interior decorating side of the business. They introduced an E-Decorating program offering interior design services without direct contact which has been hugely successful. They also created several 'how-to' styling videos on our social media streams.

Prepare for a more complex consumer landscape

Trend forecaster Tom Mirabile shares some of the ideas he was going to present in his keynote address at the March housewares show

Today's consumers have never been more diverse, demanding or complex, says Tom Mirabile, founder of Springboard Futures, and consumer trend forecaster for the International Housewares Association (IHA). After The Inspired Home Show 2020 was cancelled, IHA spoke with Mirabile to get the consumer and lifestyle insights he would have shared in his keynote session at the Show.

A key reason today's consumer landscape is so complex? We have four distinctly different generations with totally different desires and expectations making significant impacts.

"Many people have embedded perceptions of different generations," says Mirabile. "We tend to anchor economic power in terms of money, but a lot of that has really changed. There's affluence, and then there's influence. In truth, influence is likely the greater strength because it can spread so quickly across economic and social strata and affect consumer opinion and spending."

Take Generation Z – generally described as those eight to 21 years old. Certainly, that generation doesn't have a lot of buying power, but 93% of parents with Gen Z kids say those kids influence what they buy at home, according to digital agency Deep Focus.

"Now that doesn't mean you should market to kids, but you should acknowledge that kids are part of the decision-making process," says Mirabile.

Boomers too are changing their habits. "Boomers are really moving toward purchasing experiences, rather than ob-

jects," he said. "To get them to buy an object, it either has to have strong points of differentiation from what they already own...such as making a household task easier or faster, or take it off of their hands completely, such as robotic vacuum cleaners. That product delivers three things: a cleaner floor, reduced physical strain, and time. Boomers want more than function, we want intangible benefits as well."

Generation X is largely overlooked right now, he adds. But that generation currently represents 29% of all discretionary income...a number poised to grow significantly in the next decade as their wages grow and they stand to inherit money from parents.

The Millennial generation has already established its influence over everything from e-commerce and marketing to social responsibility and transparency. Now they're also starting to exhibit the financial clout we knew they'd have one day.

A few more generational realities Mirabile points out:

- Generation Z actually prefers in-store shopping to online shopping, thanks in part to new experiential elements retailers have recently added.
- Millennials are in debt, \$42,000 on average. But only 16% of that debt is from education. They've largely spent on travel and lifestyle, feeding their diverse interests and hunger for experience.

Mirabile acknowledges that generational diversity has gotten so complex that it's easy to get distracted or lost in all the numbers and opinions.

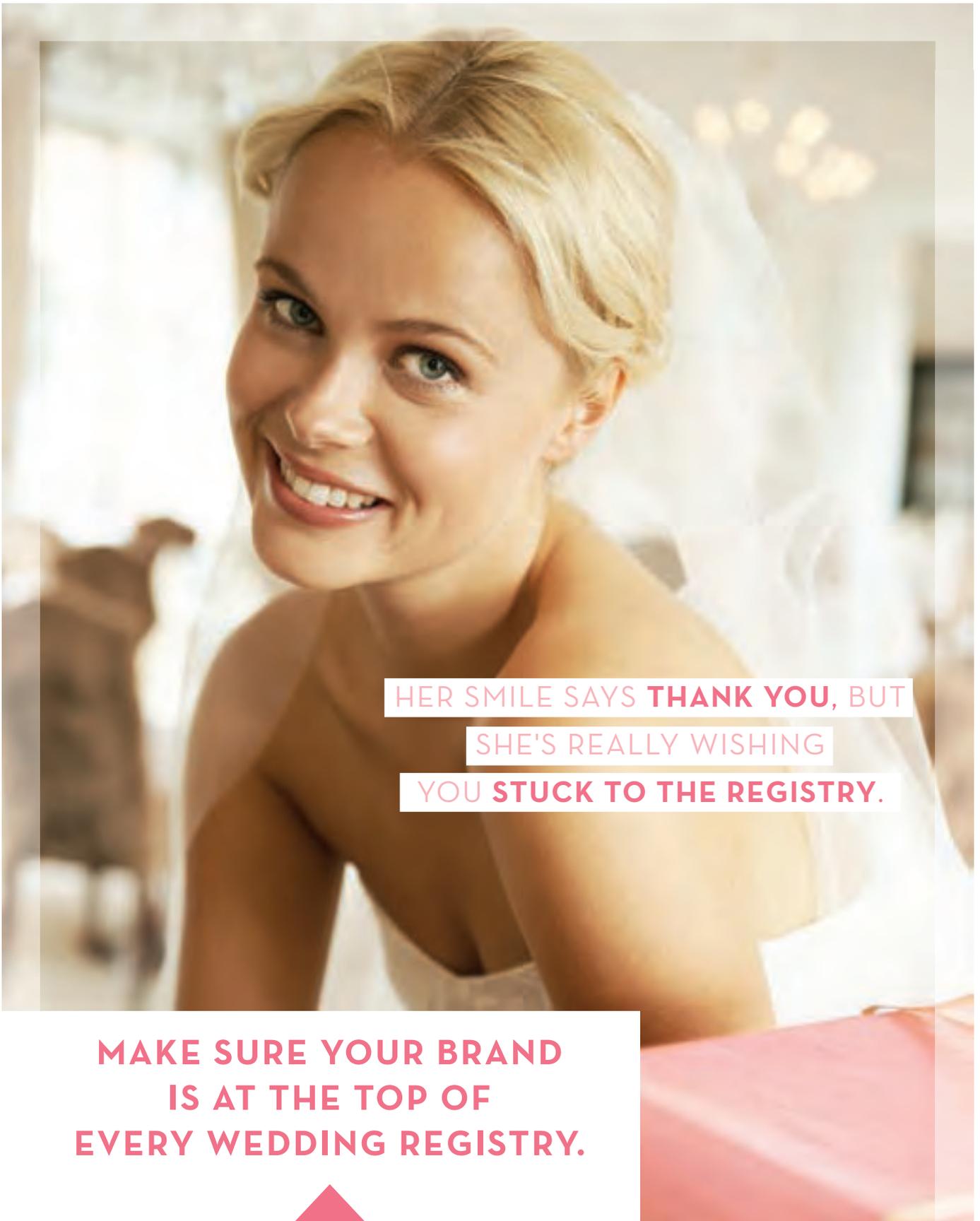
"Statistics can deliver important insight, no question," he says. "Still, the best strategies are rooted in a commitment to stay tethered to one or more fundamental consumer realities and aspirations. It's crucial to keep these universal trends in mind, because while intangible, they consistently drive consumer demand, regardless of generation or socio-economic status.

As for the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic: "I think we're really going to see who's got the best lemonade recipes," says Mirabile, alluding to the proverbial advice of turning lemons into lemonade. "And for those who really watch and listen to consumers, there are going to be some incredible new opportunities."

Mirabile predicts the pandemic will propel the already-developing virtual office trend and consumers' ability to work from home, as well as the enhanced need for products that help us monitor and care for our health from home. Any home products that help enhance consumers' feelings of comfort and security should also fare well.

"Home has assumed many identities over the past few decades; it has been a showplace and a social hub, a cocoon and a creative studio," he says. "It's played the role of office space and marketplace. It's lived through 'own your own,' 'grow your own,' 'make your own' and 'sell your own.' Next up: Home as Family Fortress."

Tom Mirabile's complete presentation is available at TheInspiredHomeShow.com



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Chicago Revisited

Connecting with customers will be key moving forward

Black Swan events like the Covid-19 pandemic won't cause current mega trends to disappear, but there will be a number of shifts in consumer attitudes and behaviors, Kate Usher, trend consultant for Trend Bible, told the International Housewares Association. She was scheduled to speak at The Inspired Home Show and after the Show was canceled, she recorded a webinar with her presentation highlights.

"There is no rulebook for the life of a trend. They are as elusive and fluid as the human beings who circulate them," says Usher, whose U.K.-based global firm specializes in predicting the future of life.

With that said, Usher emphasized that mega trends, including current ones like sustainability, aging population and urbanization, rarely disappear in the face of Black Swan events. These trends are major shifts which typically have relevance for at least a decade. Take for instance the current sustainability trend, which has resulted in more ethical purchasing in recent years. But some consumers who previously made purchasing choices based on ethical concerns may need to opt for cheaper and less environmentally friendly products as they face economic hardship. "That does not mean, however, that the trend will not return stronger than ever once the crisis is over," says Usher. "It's a temporary blip."

Another trend the staff at Trend Bible expects to slow down during and possibly after the crisis is the quest for convenience. "Sales of flour have soared as consumers turn to baking as a therapeutic domestic task, and many are actually finding enjoyment and stress relief in washing the dishes. Convenience is no longer the goal; in fact, the more inconvenient options hold more appeal."

"Householders are rediscovering the value in doing things more slowly, more deliberately and more thoroughly during lockdown," Usher explained. This shift has major implications for many housewares brands who have long operated on a convenience-first model.

"How (you) support and connect with customers through the pandemic is key" says Usher. "It's not be about selling products but building connections with people. During times of uncertainty, the brands that resonate with our need for comfort, security and authenticity will be the ones we turn back to once we can."

Moving to 2021, Usher identified four key trends or drivers of change:

- **Homebodies** – Before the current pandemic, there had been a significant increase in the number of people socializing and entertaining at home. JOMO (Joy of Missing Out), which celebrates life's ordinary moments, is an increasingly popular antidote to FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). This will certainly continue post-crisis as people seek to reconnect with small groups of people in real life.
- **Express Yourself** – Many fashion brands are moving into the home interiors market, which has made personalizing your home is more accessible than ever before. Bold colours and patterns will emerge.
- **Conscious Choices** – Many consumers will continue to look for ways to reduce their environmental footprint. Glass jars for storage is a good example.
- **Purified Home** – The "Joy of Clean and Tidy" trend will only increase as consumers "seek to regain some control in their busy and chaotic lives," says Usher. She predicts many will take preventative measures to improve indoor air quality and minimize toxicity through environmentally friendly textiles, surfaces and cleaning products. Usher's webinar can be accessed at TheInspiredHomeShow.com/education. ■

Strong sales support a positive future outlook

By Derek Miller, President, International Housewares Association

In an open letter penned to the industry in May, I mentioned speaking with seven leaders in the housewares industry and was encouraged to learn that six of those them had experienced positive sales gains over the previous weeks.

Since then, I have had numerous other conversations with IHA members and continue to be encouraged. Although not every company has recorded gains, most are getting through this challenging time and are optimistic about the future.

In May, I also referenced Joe Derochowski from The NPD Group and a very informative webinar that he led pointing out the product categories and subcategories that have shown actual growth. I recently spoke with Joe again and his analysis of and insight into the May and early June numbers provide a positive outlook, which should be encouraging news for both product suppliers and retailers.



Consumers are resilient. Despite all the economic and retail changes, they are still spending. Overall spending across the many industries that NPD tracks is up 2% from April 26 to June 13 versus last year. This increase is being led by the housewares industry with a 49% gain during that period.

Consumers are developing new habits. During the lockdown, there was an increase in people baking, cutting and colouring their own hair and hosting virtual meetings with friends and family.

Consumers' eating habits have changed. They are eating more meals, snacking and drinking more alcohol at home. As well, with fewer kids and family activities happening outside of the home, cooks are more relaxed in the preparation phase of breakfast and dinner, give more time in the kitchen.

Consumers are working from home more, which creates not only more opportunities for homemade breakfast, lunches and snacks, but is also highlighting the need to maximize kitchen, dining, entertainment and work spaces.

Consumers are tackling more home improvement projects. With the focus on upgrading living spaces, whether it's the kitchen or the backyard, any change or adjustment creates an opportunity for housewares sales.

Consumers were buying more online during the lockdown. Online sales have increased with all age groups, but as more stores reopen, sales at bricks and mortar locations are rapidly returning.

Retailers are innovating, finding ways to help both consumers and employees feel safe along the path to purchase including new traffic flows, curbside pick-up and contactless checkouts.

My positive conversations with industry leaders and the data shared from NPD are supported by very strong retail sales numbers that were released by the U.S. Department of Commerce on June 16. Retail sales increased 17.7% in May in sharp contrast to a 14.6% drop in April. Although sales need to further increase to reach pre-COVID-19 levels, the directional change is encouraging. And, as more retailers reopen stores throughout the country, and as those stores begin to operate under more normal business hours and practices, the outlook is positive.

There is no doubt that some product suppliers and retailers have been negatively impacted by the effects of the coronavirus. But, as we begin to emerge from lockdown, recent data sheds a positive light that is hopefully indicative of a bright and vibrant future for our industry.

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It's time for you to SHIFT

By Meg Soper

There is no failure except in no longer trying. – Elbert Hubbard

On March 11th our world changed. Up until that moment, and for the previous 20 years, my life focus has been to make a difference in peoples' lives as a motivational humorist. I had been privileged to travel across North America to share my message for personal growth and building resilience.

Within a few hours of the global pandemic announcement my bookings fell away like pins at a Bowlerama. I realized that I had taken things for granted, like getting on a plane, criss-crossing the continent, or being able to give an audience member a hug.

Those dark early days were full of worry and self-doubt. I figured if I could not be in person to deliver my message, then what was the point? I mean, some things just do not translate when you talk to a camera lens.

"It's been a great run, but I think I am done" I said in exasperation to my husband in the early days of the lockdown.

For those who have dedicated their careers to the housewares industry, no doubt the impact of this crisis has been devastating. You too have lost your ability to connect 'in person' with customers, to delight them with the care and service that makes a difference in their quality of life. And no doubt the road forward is paved with uncertainty as you try and imagine how the future will unfold.

Like me, I imagine you too have felt powerless and frightened as you consider the challenges that lay ahead. Which

leaves us with two options: stand back and just hope that our world returns to the way it was, OR take control and commit to the SHIFT.

I prefer the second option.

I realized the passion I have for connecting with people and making a difference in their lives gave me no choice but to dig deep and confront my own self-doubt with a mindset of decisive action. Being mindful of where we direct our mental energy can help us focus attention on productive thoughts and ideas and make all the difference in building our resilience and maintaining a positive mindset.

So, how will you make the SHIFT in your business?

Start by acknowledging that a major pivot may be required and that you will need help. For me it made all the difference to reach out to other speakers – people I compete with – who offered me comfort and encouragement as they faced similar challenges. From reading *Home Style* magazine over the years, I have witnessed the support you demonstrate to one another in the housewares industry. Knowing I was not alone helped me deal with my insecurities and map the path forward in small and manageable steps.

As an entrepreneur, ask yourself: what do I need to do to make the SHIFT, and who can I turn to for help? This kind of disruption demands that we find new ways of thinking and doing. And if anxiety has you stopped in your tracks know you are not alone! Acknowledge the anxiety for what it is – a natural human reaction to stress and fear of the



unknown. Only then can you move past it.

Next, take the time to think of the one strength you have that will propel you to decisive action? How will you use those innate skills and talents going forward? What needs to change to allow you to SHIFT to the next gear to realize your vision for the future?

Remember to breathe. Making the SHIFT will call for every ounce of focus and energy. When stress or anxiety amps up it often plays out with muscle tension. At these times we need to be mindful of our breathing. So, when anxiety starts to take over: INHALE for four beats, HOLD for four beats and EXHALE for four beats.

Finally, lean into the people in your life who lift you up and be gentle with yourself when it comes to embracing the change that lies ahead. The SHIFT takes time. You can do this!

ABOUT MEG SOPER

Meg Soper is a motivational humorist who works throughout North America inspiring audiences with insights and ideas to bolster personal resilience, enhance interpersonal relationships and promote a positive mindset. Meg's experience as a staff nurse in the Operating Room, and as a stand-up comic, gives her a front-line perspective on managing well in high stress environments, and how we can use humor and laughter to help us be at our best. Visit www.megsoper.com.



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