

KITCHENWARE NEWS

Housewares Review

SERVING KITCHENWARE, HOUSEWARES AND TABLETOP MARKETS

Event Marketing Makes Cooks Corner a Tourist Destination

BY LORRIE BAUMANN

Cooks Corner Owner Peter Burback is still reveling in the success of a Wüsthof promotion that featured a visit by Harald Wüsthof as well as Wüsthof Executive Chef Mike Garaghty. The November 9 event wasn't just the biggest Wüsthof sale in Cook's Corner history; it was Wüsthof-Trident Knife Company's biggest one-day Harald Wüsthof event ever, Burback says.

Harald Wüsthof is the seventh generation Managing Partner of the Solingen-Germany-based company with its family-owned and managed heritage that spans nearly two centuries. So bringing him to Cooks Corner, the nation's largest kitchen store, in Green Bay, Wisc., was kind of a big deal for Burback as well as the

for a lifetime after Lambeau Field's executive chef invited them up to his suite at the field during the game. Wüsthof presented the executive chef with knives, and he and Wüsthof talked knife skills. "Earlier in the year the General Manager of the food service company that prepares all the food for Lambeau Field purchased Wüsthof knives to reward the 30+ Lambeau chefs for a great 2012, and Burback had the Packer logo engraved on them. The chefs had those knives with them for Wüsthof to autograph, which he did while watching the game.

But although this particular weekend was exceptional for the quality of the memories that came out of it, it's not entirely different from the kinds of events that are likely to happen in Cooks Corner two or three times during the year, in addition to the smaller promotions like the holiday carolers who are booked to sing at the store during the season, the regular giveaways, the bus tours that visit the store and the occasional band concert on the sales floor. "I'm trying to create the Disney World of cooking stores," Burback says.

He's a ceaseless marketer, and the Wüsthof event was heavily promoted. "I do a lot of t.v.," Burback says. Flyers advertising the event were inserted into the local newspaper and a mailing of approximately 20,000 brochures went to Cooks Corner's regular mailing list. There was an email campaign. Planning for it all took a couple of months before the event itself. "This is the kind of thing I do," Burback says.

The last big bash like this was when Cooks Corner moved to its present location just four months ago, although it's only one mile down the from its previous location, vehicle traffic increased from 7,000 cars per day to about 150,000 cars a day on the streets around it. On grand opening day, customers started lining up at 6 a.m. to be the first inside to see and buy.

Burback was lured into his 25,000 square foot space by that traffic and the developer's interest in the traffic volume that Cooks Corner could bring into the shopping center. "We draw a couple of hundred thousand shoppers a year into our store," Burback says.

The new store includes space for a cooking school furnished with \$35,000-worth of Sub-Zero and Wolf appliances and a store-within-a-store concept offering Green Bay's only Wisconsin cheese store; the largest selection of hot sauces in the state, with more than 400 varieties for sale; a candy shop with homemade fresh fudge, Jelly Belly jelly beans, and roasted nuts; a Zyliss display custom-built for the store by the company; a Joseph Joseph shop that's actually one of the company's retired trade show booths and the country's largest display of kitchen gadgets, with more than 18,000 SKUs in stock. "What sets it apart from every other kitchen store in the world is our gadget wall. Over 300 linear feet of slat wall full of gadgets," Burback says. "When you come to our store, you're going to find what you want, and the prices are competitive." A wine shop is the newest addition. And of

course, "There's not a bigger or more beautiful Wüsthof display in the world," Burback says. "Vendors have been really helpful." At the back of the store, there's an outlet center, where Cooks Corner sells discontinued product lines, remaindered merchandise, refurbished kitchen equipment and some scratch-and-dent items – whatever he can get for a significant discount below regular wholesale prices and sell to customers who care more about price or the thrill of a bargain than with having the latest model. "We use the outlet store as a promotion tool, because they can sell the equipment below MAP," Burback says. Otherwise, the store's pricing philosophy is generally one of everyday low prices, with items offered at the MAP prices. Just a block away from a Bed, Bath & Beyond store, competitive pricing is essential to Cooks Corner, but the well-trained staff also encourages shoppers to come into the store to get answers to all of their culinary questions. "Like with Wüsthof knives, the staff has gone through training to understand how they're made and why the knives are worth the price. They can explain that to the consumer," Burback says. "They might see something at a Pampered Chef party, but they come to my store to buy it, because they know they can learn the facts about it." His staff is trained to offer customers a less expensive item if it performs as well as the more expensive item they're looking at. "We've built that reputation. People feel that they're treated fairly in my store," Burback says. "My goal is that when people leave, they feel like they got more than they expected."

Cooks Corner is located in The Shoppes at the Village Mall at 2605 S. Oneida Street in Green Bay, Wisc. www.cookscorner.com.

