



Out-of-the-Box

BY MICHAEL KUDERKA

We wanted to start off 2011 by highlighting some of the Out-of-the-Box ideas retailers sent in at the end of last year.

Color Coding Beer

Our first Out-of-the-Box tip comes from Michael Mizla of Holiday Spirits in Manchester, Connecticut. Holiday Spirits continues to expand their beer selection and has a “B+” rating on BeerAdvocate.com.

Holiday Spirits was one of our early Style Trends subscribers, and has had a great amount of success using the shelf talker system. Recently Michael decided to use the program’s shelf talker color options to differentiate the various beer brands available in his store. “We now print out blue shelf talkers for lagers and green shelf talkers for ales,” explained Michael, “the customers like the descriptions and the colors help them more quickly find the style of beer they want.” Having this information is a big hit with the customers and it extends the time they spend in the store, discovering everything in the beer aisle.

Who’s in the club?

Our second Out-of-the-Box tip comes from Wade Schaum, General Manager of a fairly new concept restaurant in Madison, Indiana called the BoneYard Grill. The restaurant, which can seat up to 131 people, is not yet rated on BeerAdvocate.com.

Wade describes the BoneYard Grill as a family style sports bar that has shunned the deep fryer for cooking on the restaurant’s six foot wide grill. The BoneYard carries over 60 different kinds of craft and imported beers, and according to Wade (a self proclaimed beer geek) they would carry more beer if they had the room.

“I started a beer club for my guests so I could get the general public to get away from the everyday ordinary domestic beers,” explains Wade, “my whole idea was to get my guests to try different styles of beer so they would find something new and I could help them discover better beer.”

“The way the club works, after a customer drinks all of our beers at least once, they are recognized with a 22 oz. beer stein with our logo. We also list their name and their number on the club’s “finished the list” list. Once a club member has completed “the list,” they can select their beer of choice and a free meal on me,” continued Wade.

Other club perks include (once they have completed “the list”) a 22 oz. of draft beer for the pricing of a pint, special food offers and invitations to the BoneYard’s monthly beer tastings.

For Wade, the Beer Club has been a big hit. The BoneYard has almost 300 people signed up for the club and they have had 25 people finish “the list” in the first three months since of the club began. Even better for Madison, Indiana, is the spillover effect to other local businesses. After the BoneYard’s beer success, it seems that other local bars, restaurants and liquor stores are carrying more and more craft and import beers to try and keep up with the BoneYard’s better beer selection.

“The club has been great because it brings people back to the restaurant and it is like they are in their own little fraternity. The members come up with nicknames for each other and they are always trying to enlist other people to join,” concludes Wade, “What I am proudest of is helping my customers acquire a taste for a better made beer.”

“What I am proudest of its helping my customers acquire a taste for a better made beer.” - Wade Schaum of Bone Yard Grill

Are You Thinking Out-of-the-Box?

How innovative is your store at selling beer? We would like to know. If you have promotions that go beyond refilling the cold box, we would like to hear from you and share your “out-of-the-box” thinking with our fellow *Beverage Media* readers.

E-mail me at mkuderka@mcbasset.com with your successful ideas for selling beer, along with your contact information. If we write about your program in our column we will send you a free copy of The third Edition of *The Essential Reference of Domestic Brewers and Their Bottled Brands*.

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