

Plantable products lead the zero-waste revolution in 2024



Demand for plantable products is skyrocketing as consumers become more aware of environmentally friendly and functional offerings to replace their less sustainable/single use counterparts. According to the Global Sustainability Study conducted by consultancy group Simon Kucher, 71 per cent of global consumers are making changes to the way they live and the products they buy in an attempt to be more sustainable.

For many consumers, plantable products are a perfect introduction to the zero-waste philosophy and zero-waste consumerism will continue to grow as consumers look to minimise their environmental footprint without compromising on the amenities and comforts of modern life.

Plantable packaging alone is expected to rise from US\$120 million in 2023 to \$340 million by 2033. The study also shows that 77 per cent of Gen Z and 72 per cent of Millennials are willing to pay extra for sustainable products. Eco stationery brand Left-handesign has witnessed this first-hand having seen strong growth since its launch in 2017 in Singapore. "It has been incredibly affirming to see how the simple idea of embedding seeds into everyday items like pens and packaging can fuel an entire sustainability movement in which anyone can take part," says founder Radhika Mayani.

"As the climate crisis worsens, we are proud to be part of the solution of reducing landfill and actively contributing to reforestation and biodiversity to create a new model of consumerism that is kinder to the planet." Having recently entered the Australian market, Left-handesign is quickly gaining traction for its innovative zero-waste products like the signature smooth gel BIJ pen, which can be planted straight into the ground at the end of its life to grow into herbs, flowers and vegetables.

In Australia alone it's estimated that 140 million pens end up in landfill every single year. Globally over 10 billion plastic pens are thrown out each

year, creating a stream of toxic plastic waste that pollutes our planet. "It has been a challenge to create a viable business where the emphasis is on products that are created for the circular economy," says founder, Radhika Mayani. "But our brand's success shows there is real appetite for solutions that address the ecological devastation of existing industries." When consumers and businesses opt for Left-handesign they are actively investing in a greener future where carbon-neutrality, 100 per cent renewable energy and zero-waste becomes the norm. As a business, Left-handesign also facilitates reforestation and the effort to clean up our oceans through various initiatives like Trace and 1% For The Planet. ■

Source: Australian GiftGuide

Keys to success for housewares industry in 2024 deciphered

From increasing operational efficiency to building key relationships, here's how the home and housewares industry can continue to grow. Consumer spending remains a significant challenge for the housewares industry due to factors such as inflation and lower incomes. Home and housewares sales experienced a decline of 5 percent in dollars and 7 percent in units in 2023 compared to 2022, as reported by Circana's Retail Tracking. However, compared to pre-pandemic levels in 2019, sales saw a significant increase of 24 percent in dollars and 2 percent in units. This positions the home and housewares industry as one of only two general merchandise categories to surpass pre-pandemic levels in both dollars and units, according to Joe Derochowski, Circana's vice president and home industry advisor. Despite these challenges, there are positive signs emerging, particularly in consumer confidence. A survey from the University of Michigan indicates a 13 percent increase in U.S. consumer sentiment in January 2024, reaching its highest level in two and a half years. This growth in optimism spans demographic groups and geographical regions and is attributed to outlooks on inflation and income prospects.

Resetting for Strategic Growth : Though many companies did not stop adjusting their business models during the recent years, many housewares executives characterized 2023/2024 as the real time for resetting and moving forward. While resets like may include efforts to increase efficiency, improve vendor or buyer relationships, and add new programs, it can also take the form of sunseting categories and programs or partnerships that no longer work or fit within a new strategic plan.

Retail Relationships : In retail relationships, Widgeteer Inc., led by president Bill McHenry, emphasizes "good communication" and "good give-and-take partnerships" to foster success. McHenry highlights the importance of relationships, emphasizing that facilitating the work of merchants, buyers, and demand planning teams leads to mutual success. Greenspon, further elaborating, mentions their focus on providing value to retail partners through products tailored to their customer base, offering compelling value propositions amidst challenges like lowered consumer confidence and high inflation in 2023, and enhancing supply chain and technology support.



Connecting with Consumers: On the consumer side of the equation, many housewares suppliers are updating how they connect with consumers and get to know them, according to the IHA. In particular, they are making digital marketing and social media a priority for building brand awareness and gaining new customers. And those mediums are providing them with more than just an effective vehicle for telling their stories – they are also providing a way for them to learn more about current and potential customers. Many are also using their digital data and information from outside trend-tracking sources to refine marketing efforts.

New Products : In a tough economic climate, newness is often what inspires consumers to buy. They continue to invest in product development and new product launches. Investment in new products is especially important in categories that have become heavily commoditized. Some companies are also taking the opportunity to create new packaging and new designs or add new brands to their portfolio.

Operational Efficiency : While less flashy or externally obvious, many housewares companies have adjusted their operations to increase efficiency and/or dexterity as they go into 2024. For some, that means investing in new technology to assist with enterprise resource planning or warehouse management. For others, it's a matter of adding new third-party logistics providers or diversifying where products are produced. Making the most of one's internal team is also top of mind for many housewares executives. ■

Source : HFN Digital

Kitchenware trends show consumers want personality at home

The act of gift giving is special – it’s a way to show someone you were thinking of them, as well as a way to connect with them, whether in a sentimental way or to share a good laugh. Through cheeky sayings and laugh-out-loud funnies to nods to favorite TV shows and movies, items in the kitchen are becoming a fun way to do that.

With manufacturers continuing to contend with increased material costs, kitchenware designers are joining forces with outside partners that lend their brand power to products for cooking, serving and entertaining. Thanks to the pandemic-inspired trend of cooking at home, more chefs are on the hunt for fun ways to add personality to their workspace in the kitchen. Licensed culinary goods and fun, quirky tea towels are great gift options consumers gravitate towards in 2024.

According to the 2024 Gift Book Consumer Survey (Australia), 48 percent of respondents are expected to purchase kitchenware in the next 12 months — more than twice the rate of the previous year. New homeowners in Australia who recently took advantage of low mortgage rates are seeking ways to add a personal touch to their cooking space. Likewise, college grads with new apartments are in the market for products that can proudly showcase their alma maters, such as licensed drinkware, coasters and serving platters. The Gift Book cites dinnerware (51 percent) and serveware (43 percent) as the top categories purchased by Gen Zers.



Perennial properties also have a place in the kitchen. The Australian annual Top Global Licensors report has listed the Walt Disney Company yet again as the No. 1 worldwide license. As the company celebrates its 100th anniversary this fall, retailers can expect to see more merchandise in honor of this milestone achievement.

Another top property that will have stores thinking pink is Mattel’s Barbie. Following this summer’s blockbuster movie that shattered box office figures, manufacturers have responded with pink-hued kitchen gadgets in all categories, from tea kettles and dish plates to utensils and rice cookers. And with sales of rice cookers up 34 percent in the last year, as per the NPD Group, consumers will have a perfect excuse to create a kitschier kitchen.

Over the last several years, tea towels with funny or sassy sayings on them have proved popular, and what’s better is that they are inherently useful in the kitchen and dining room. This trend can be anticipated to continue as consumers look to share their sense of humor. Topics one expects to see do well in the next year include sassy, mom humour, snarky, pet lover and niche interests. For a mother who just bought a new house, wrapping the tea towel around a bottle of olive oil or wine is a cute and functional way to say congratulations. Or for the dog lover hosting a dinner party, a tea towel reflecting her adoration for her furry friend along with crunchy treats for Fido is a walk in the park.

The tea towel can be an easy main gift or an effortless giftable add-on. Include a mixture of silly and sassy by the kitchen or home section of your gift store, and maybe place the super snarky ones in place that isn’t eye level with little ones, depending on your average customer. In your kitchen and gourmet displays, pair the tea towels with kitchen tools, snacks or other items to encourage upselling. Lastly, stash a couple easy people-pleasers by the register for impulse buyers. ■



Source: Australian GiftGuide