

MATCHMAKING AND MARKETING

SHOWS AND STRATEGIES FOR SELLING GRILLS

FOR EVERYONE, FROM MOM-AND-POP SETUPS

to established brands, industry tradeshows are a good place to get connected. Think of them as the Match.com of the manufacturer/retail partnership with distributors the conduit. In addition, with mini-informational sessions, seminars and keynote addresses from professionals in areas such as marketing, retail and distribution, the shows afford a golden opportunity, not only for networking, but for gleaning valuable information to help position products.

"Attending shows like HPBExpo offers a great return on a company's investment," said Kelly L. VanDermark, vice president of exhibitions and events for the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association. "There is no better place for networking with industry peers."

Held in March at the Music City Center in Nashville, the HPBExpo featured educational classes and manufacturing-specific sessions. The association also made information on updated and new regulations facing retailers available to attendees. hpbexpo.com

Getting a product in the spotlight is one aspect of trade-shows, forging partnerships with retailers and distributors is another.

"Tradeshows play a vital role for retailers and distributors to interact 'face-to-face' with the designers, engineers and marketers," said Ed Several, senior vice president and general manager of Reed Expo, organizer of the National Hardware Show.



Real winner: Gateway's Blues Hog barbecue sauces from pit master Bill Arnold have proven to be a winner among American Royal competitors.

"This unique opportunity allows re-sellers to understand the technology and key designs that differentiate one item from another," Several said. "The knowledge gained from this interaction enable re-sellers to better merchandise and market products."

The National Hardware Show takes place May 5-7 in Las Vegas. nationalhardwareshow.com

From perennial favorites to newcomers, tradeshows are the place to forge, rekindle and expand relationships between manufacturers and retailers with distributors often the bridge connecting the two.

FIRST-TIME CHARMS

Gateway Drum Smokers, a first-time exhibitor at the 2015 HPBExpo, was looking to gain exposure for its products by getting on the trade-show circuit. The company was promoting its Gateway drum smoker and Blue Hog barbecue sauces from pit master Bill Arnold at the show.

"We attended the Expo to gain exposure and product awareness for our brands," said Michelle Wurdack, marketing/sales director for Gateway

Drum Smokers and Blues Hog sauces. "Our hope is to find potential buyers to grow our distribution outlets."

Gateway

Drum Smokers, which cook directly over coals, are designed to maximize

Trail blazer: Breeo Industries' Ablaze fire pit brings back the spirit of the old West with a simplistic yet finely crafted cooking vessel. The company is hitting the road as a part of its 'Rethinking Fire Tour' across America.



flavor, moisture and tenderness of meat (\$749-\$849). The company's Bill Arnold's Blues Hog sauces, favorites on the competition trail, are used by national and international top competitors, as well as in restaurants. The varieties include: Blues Hog Original (voted best base on the planet and People's Choice at the American Royal); Blues Hog Tennessee Red (thin vinegar and pepper-based sauce); Blues Hog Smokey Mountain (grilling/finishing sauce with natural hickory smoke) and Blues Hog Mustard (sweet yet zesty honey mustard blend); \$4.95 each. gatewaydrumsmokers.com

RETHINKING MARKETING GAME

For Ohio-based Breeo Industries, which launched its first line of products at the 2014 HPBExpo, the experience of a tradeshow was invaluable. The company took home the Best in Category and Best in Show awards for its Ablaze reduced smoke fire pit (\$695).

After its successful product launch at 2014 HPBExpo, the company mapped out a promotion strategy, which includes hitting the major tradeshows along with taking to the road with the 2015 "Rethinking Fire Tour."

"After doing so well at HPBExpo last year, we worked out an intense, detailed strategy for 2015," said Jonathan Miller, vice president of business development, Breeo Industries.

Miller, who also thinks of the tour as "rethinking life," and his wife are kicking off a year-long experience living on

the road touting their product by hitting tradeshows, demonstrating their product and keeping the world tuned-in via social media.

"We plan to spend the year immersed in social media and living sustainably on the road," Miller said. "Our objective is to let a broad consumer base know our product fits into any lifestyle."

The company's products, made in the Amish community, are finely crafted and constructed using state-of-the-art welding techniques. For 2015, the company launched add-ons for the Ablaze cooking product along with the Luxeve fire pit (\$999), introduced last month at the HPBExpo. The new pit features a patent-pending smoke re-burning technology that reduces the smoke factor. rethinkingfire.com

BRANDING POWER

Even seasoned companies such as Blue Rhino, which has a strong consumer base, find tradeshows necessary to success.

"Our mission is not to find a new niche, but to make great products that fill a need," said Chris J. Hartley, vice president of North Carolina-based Blue Rhino. "Tradeshows such as the HPBExpo and the National Hardware Show are important venues for companies like ours to accomplish this goal."

Hartley also stresses the importance for a product to have the ability to sell itself, noting presentation is a key marketing point for Blue Rhino.

"Brand can be critical," Hartley said. "The package design, how the product is showcased and even the product description are essential."

The company's 2015 lineup includes a menagerie of accessories, including a Hershey S'mores melting tray (\$7.99), the Mr. Bar-B-Q Reversible Griddle (\$29.99) and Mr. Pizza brand pizza set (\$44.99). bluerhino.com



Fun stuff: Blue Rhino puts the fun in functional with grilling accessories that include a Hershey S'mores kit and Mr. Pizza brand pizza set.

CROSS-BRANDING

"Tradeshows have a level of importance because you have a captive audience who is already interested in the market," said Derald Schultz, marketing director of Georgia-based Primo Ceramic Grills USA. However, what the company really focuses on is improving their products to offer something "new" to consumers.

"There is no substitute for new," Schultz said. "New product development shows we are progressive and listen to what our audience wants."

The company has an aggressive plan to bring consumer and retailer together. "Our plan provides POS and print materials to drive consumers to retailers through our online store finder and social media channels," Schultz said.

Schultz also believes cross-branding Primo's product



American pride: Primo Ceramic Grills takes pride in offering Made in the USA ceramic grills and in joining other brands. New for 2015, Primo debuts the Jack Daniel's Edition Oval XL 400.

with American food and drink companies is a plus. "Another positioning strategy we take is partnering with a strong American food and drink brand," Schultz said

Primo partnered with Jack Daniel's, which has a hand in the barbecue pot with its bar-

becue sauce line and grill competitions sponsorships, for the Jack Daniel's Edition Oval XL 400. The grill's distinct, patented ceramic interior walls and oval shape are just a few of the uncommon elements that set the product aside from others. primogrill.com

PERENNIAL FAVORITE ADDS POPS OF COLOR

Even evergreen Weber-Stephen Products, a brand as synonymous with the grilling industry as brands such as Coca-Cola, Apple and Xerox are to their industries, can benefit from exhibiting at tradeshows.

"Tradeshows are vital in that they allow us to personally connect with our retailers, and more importantly, showcase new products and initiatives," said Kim Lefko, Weber executive vice president of marketing, Americas, Weber-Stephen Products.

New initiatives for 2015 include expanding the Weber

Grill Academy Experience, a mobile showroom that doubles as a hands-on traveling academy.

"Three of these mobile showrooms will travel across the country visiting retail locations, training store associates on the Weber grilling method and its expansive product offering," Lefko said.

New additions include the colorful Q1200 portable grills (blue, purple, fuchsia, green, orange and a basic black). The petite grill is not a lightweight; it features fold-out tables, electronic ignition, porcelain-enamel cast iron cooking plates and built-in thermometer (\$219). The Performer Premium grill is outfitted with new features that include a gourmet barbecue system (removable center grate used to insert

Continued

accessories such as a sear grate, wok, griddle, pizza stone and more), thermostat work table, weather-protected CharBin storage container and removable backlit LCD cook timer (\$449). weber.com

And while all manufacturers aren't set on exhibiting at tradeshows, at least at the moment, most have launched massive promotional strategies.

WHEN OLD AND NEW WORLDS COLLIDE

"At this time we have no plans of participating in a tradeshow," said Natalia Garcia, public relations spokesperson for Gaucho Garcia.

After it was launched in February, Gaucho Garcia instituted its own plan to promote its grill, concentrating on the product's uniqueness and authenticity as selling points.

"We feel that Gaucho Garcia is the most authentic Argentina-style parrilla in North America," said Gabriel Garcia, founder and head gaucho of California-based Gaucho Garcia: The Art of Asado.

The company's V-groove grate grill was co-designed



Kettle of goods: Weber's Q1200 portable grills bring color to its line of basic black kettles. In addition to green, the line features orange, blue, yellow and fuchsia.

Weber implemented upgrades for its Premier Line, including the BBQ System where interchangeable insets can be used to cook a variety of dishes.

with Argentinean artisans, blending a time-honored tradition with new technology to bring the Argentine cooking experience to new markets. Garcia's plan for his infant company is to capitalize on social media and direct sales via its online store.

The company is taking a direct, down-to-earth strategy that includes informational blogging and videos.

"We feel our blog about South American cooking, that honors the culture and tradition of hardwood grilling and asado, is a tool that sets our



product apart from the competition," Garcia said.

Detailing includes a hand-cranked V-shaped groove design, which allows for temperature control and regulated cooking as the surface raises and lowers (18-inch range) with the turning of the crank along with a dripping pan that collects juices that can be used for basting, sauces or gravies. The product also features a patent-pending firebox design (included with every model), which converts wood logs

to hardwood coal. Chico model (\$2,399); Grande model (\$3,899). gauchogarcia.com

Hooking up with a distributor or retailer is a shared goal because they are looking for merchandise to expand their coffers.

"As a distributor, tradeshows are crucial for finding product," said Owen Leonard, COO of Fox Run Brands. With a product line that runs the gamut from whimsical to high-end, Leonard said he believes the variety differentiates his company from others. "It's a way to see a lot of product in one place as well as a means to staying on top of the trends." foxrunbrands.com

Smaller retailers, such as Fort Collins, Colo.-based JAX Mercantile, attend shows to not only find new product, but to "build relationships with companies they already have a tie with," said Chrissy LaBarr buyer for the outdoor store merchandiser.

"We're always looking for more products to merchandise and tradeshows are a good place to find them," said Corey Kuhne, department manager of JAX Outdoor Gear. jaxmercantile.com

Even big leaguers, such as mega electronic retailer QVC, hunt for products at the major tradeshows. The company makes use of the broad spectrum of companies in one place to find new products.

"At QVC our merchandise team is always looking for new products to bring our consumers," said Rich Yoegel, director of merchandising at QVC.

"Our buyers are at major retail events and tradeshows throughout the year," Yoegel said. "They attend new product showcases, meet with established and new vendors and walk the aisles looking to discover new products."

qvc.com

Authentic Argentine experience: Gaucho Garcia: The Art of Asado V-Groove Grate Grill blends Old World with new technology for an authentic South American cooking experience.



BBQ TODAY EXTRA

BARBECUE TOOLS, GADGETS AND GIFTS APPEAR AT HOUSEWARES SHOW

THE INTERNATIONAL HOME AND HOUSEWARES

Show was held in March at McCormick Place in Chicago. Some pretty cool items were seen about the floor, including grilling accessories by companies as far away as the United Kingdom.

Here are a few samples discovered at the show:

Boska: The Barbecue tool belt is awesome. Just like a regular tool belt, it has multiple loops and compartments to holster all your grilling utensils. boska.com

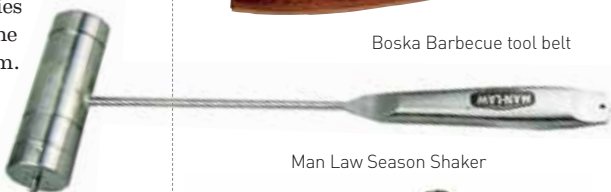
Cameron's Products: Cameron's Smoker Bag provides smoked flavor without the mess or hassle. Season food, place in bag, cook and voila! The patented aluminum pouch contains wood chips between the inner lining and outer packaging. The bags can be used in the oven. camerons-products.com

Grillight: The stainless steel grilling utensils with built-in LED light are both functional and innovative. The cooking tools feature a water-resistant patented flashlight design with angled head and 20,000-hour bulb life. A gift set containing spatula, tong, fork, brush and apron and a wide spatula and tongs is new for 2015. grillight.com

Jaccard: Love the Original Pig Tail Food Flipper, meat maximizer tenderizer, marinating container and S'mores GloStix from the company that offers an array of fanciful but functional products. jaccard.com



Boska Barbecue tool belt



Man Law Season Shaker



mer restaurant owner looking to take the labor out of cooking his Cajun char-grilled oysters. Place oysters in the flat-bottom medical grade stainless steel vessel for char-grilled items.

The sky's the limit with this laser cut accessory that can be



Qbag



Wilton Armetale
Gourmet
Grillware Griller



Jaccard Original
Pig Tail Food

Man Law: A collapsible fork with hook for hanging and season shaker with long handle to extend over the grill are definitely accessories every backyard chef should have. manlawbbq.com

Mossy Oak: Can you say pretty in pink with a nature theme? These barbecue tools are strictly for the feminine set. mossyoak.com

Qbag LTD: The United Kingdom delivers a practical grilling product to the American market. The Qbag, alu (heavier than aluminum) foil cooking bags, steams food locking in moisture for a healthier, more tasty meal. qbag.com

Schwing's: Louisiana-based SOS Oyster Shells "New Orleans Cajun Cookware" (a proudly made in the USA product) was designed by a for-

used to cook shrimp, vegetables, desserts and more. Sauces can be added while cooking. sosoystershells.com

Wilton Armetale: Gourmet Grillware tags itself as "a creative way to cook & serve every day" and lives up to its claim. New for 2015 are the Grillware Football Griller, Pig Griller and Grill Pan. gourmetgrillware.com