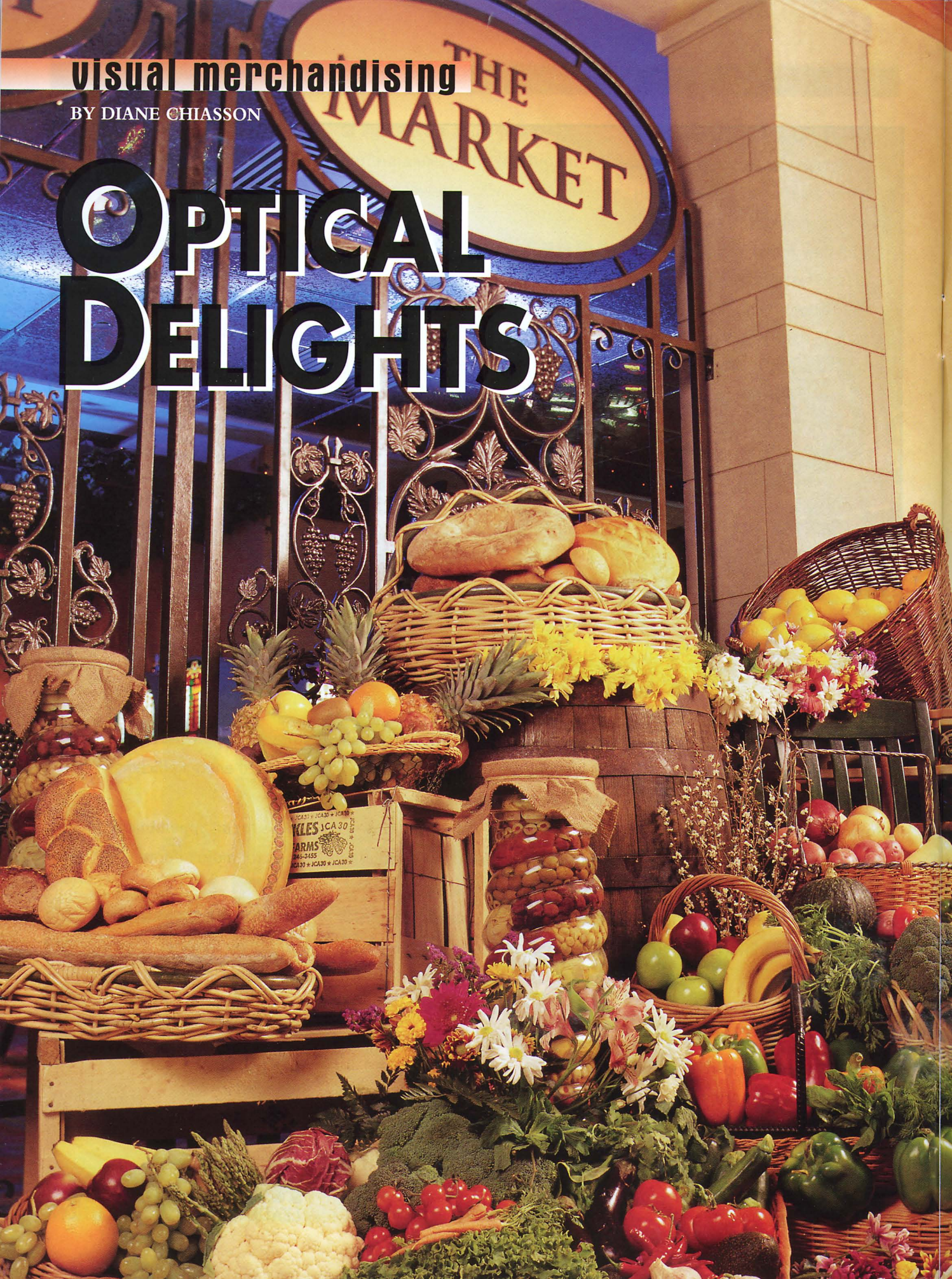


visual merchandising

BY DIANE CHIASSON

OPTICAL DELIGHTS



FIVE TIPS TO ENHANCE YOUR DISPLAYS

1. Signage with great graphics can win a customer over. Use exciting power walls, focal points and end displays at every turn. Put new, exciting and profitable merchandise at the front of the store.

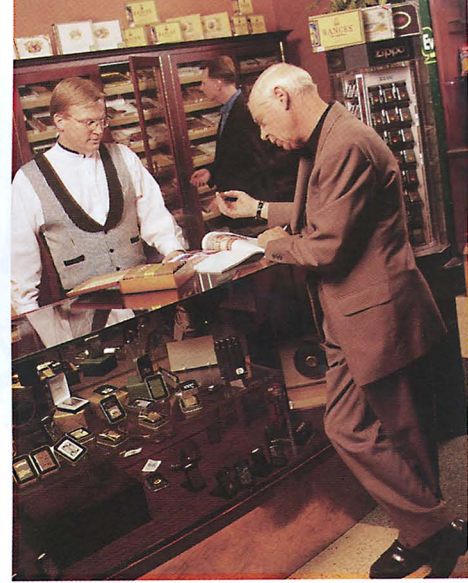
2. Customers need to see the merchandise they are considering buying. Whether your store is discount or upscale, lighting can play a dramatic role in how customers view merchandise. Use lighting and fixturing to promote the sale.

3. Visual merchandising should be meaningful and easy to digest. Presentations should be neatly and tightly organized. Related merchandise should be grouped to encourage multiple sales. Promotional or advertised items should be available for the customer to see and/or touch. And product should be marked for size as well as labeled and priced so the customer does not scurry around for help.

4. Effective displays attract attention, giving customers ideas and encouraging them to further examine or consider the product. Therefore, displays should be positioned in key focal points, and themed throughout the store using merchandise from the entire operation. Also, assembling a major display provides your store with excitement, interest and variety.

5. The time, energy and money invested in regularly updating your displays will be well spent. Customers will begin to expect something new and inspiring every time they enter your store. You should change displays at least as frequently as your average repeat visit.

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Any business that wishes to survive and thrive today must find innovative means of drawing in maximum revenue. One answer is to use your existing space, staff and other resources more effectively. Even non-traditional retailers, like restaurants, hotels and casinos, can use space within their establishments to identify and develop unexplored retail opportunities.

The trend-setting concept of retail merchandising is no longer just a complement to many entertainment venues, but a business in itself. Attention spans are becoming shorter and shorter. Unless customers have something to either look at or occupy them between each entertainment station, chances are they will pack up and go someplace else.

Casino Niagara is no exception. Canada's largest gaming venue hired our firm to create a shopping concept unique to casino-goers, offering each of the 16,000 visitors a day an optical delight that embellishes their entertainment experience. The casino is now host to several retail shops set in a courtyard-like atmosphere, including a Niagara-region souvenir gift shop with fine gourmet food products, a whimsical magnet store, an amusing collectibles shop, a news and sundries store, an upscale gift boutique, and a Casino Niagara brand-name merchandise boutique.

In any new project of this sort, our first job is to determine what makes each establishment unique, and then design a retail merchandising and marketing concept to sell it. The following are just a few of the approaches to consider:

- If your restaurant has the best pies, salsa or bread in town, you can put your name on it and sell it. We had developed a retail market for Mövenpick's Marché restaurant which now attributes over 30% of its sales to smartly-packaged private label items. Remember, clever visuals and displays are vital to entice patrons to make the purchase.
- If patrons flock to your establishment for the fun and exciting ambiance, why not sell them a T-shirt to complete the experience? Clothing has an indefinite shelf life and generates high margin, low headache sales, as well as generating a walking, talking billboard for your firm.
- As well as being profitable, allowing customers to shop for gifts such as postcards, decorative mugs or theme items (i.e., chocolate poker chips for casinos) makes the wait for a table, a late arriving party or a long lineup to the cash register seem a lot shorter.
- Many retail purchases today are made on impulse, and holiday and special events such as Valentine's or Mother's Day are prime times for gift shopping. Gourmet foods such as oils, preserves and candies make perfect gifts.
- Gift baskets are becoming a creative new profit source for selling and advertising food products and souvenirs, and can include everything from food and trinkets to gift certificates.
- Develop and implement a mail-order catalogue of products, food and non-food items, paraphernalia, souvenirs, gift baskets and gift certificates.
- Any operational improvement program should take into account the effect on the morale, and hence the productivity, of staff. Greater staff involvement results in higher morale and better service to the customer. **CR**