

Marketing Your Cookbook

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Where Do You Start?

Marketing is defined as “the commercial functions involved in transferring goods from producer to consumer.” By this definition, marketing is not an overwhelming concept; it is simply how you get your sales message to the people who will buy your product and entice them to buy.

As a cookbook author, you have several advantages when it comes to marketing. One advantage is tradition. Fundraising through cookbooks began after the Civil War as women’s charities wrote cookbooks to raise funds for victims of the war. Since that time, fundraising cookbooks have evolved into high quality, sophisticated products.

Cookbook fundraising remains successful for a reason – people need and love to eat. However, through the years consumers have become quite selective because of the volume of cookbooks on the market. How can you make your cookbook successful? The key is to meet a need that isn’t being met, whether it’s in subject, format, or price.

Traits of a successful cookbook include originality, quality, and a contribution to literature – and unless they are buying a cookbook as merely a collectible or keepsake, people want recipes they can use.

The responsibility of marketing your cookbook lies with you – many will take interest in buying your book if it’s promoted to the right audience. The goal of this guide is to help you make informed marketing decisions throughout the creation, pricing, promotion, and distribution of your cookbook.

Cookbook Style

Traditional and theme-oriented are the two basic cookbook styles. How to best create, price, and market your cookbook depends on its style. Whether you create a traditional or theme-oriented cookbook depends on your group and its members. Cookbook styles are not exclusive. In fact, elements of each may be successfully combined – there are no boundaries. Research your style ideas well, research your competition, know your market, and make your cookbook stand out.

Traditional Cookbooks

Traditional cookbooks can be found in almost every home. These cookbooks include most community, church, fundraising, and family cookbooks, and feature a wide variety of recipes ranging from appetizers to main dishes and desserts. Traditional community cookbooks appeal to a local, grass-roots American market, and reflect the character and ethnic roots of that community. A church cookbook, where the recipes have been donated by members of the congregation, is a familiar form of a traditional community cookbook.

A well-known traditional cookbook on the national market is *Better Homes and Gardens® New Cook Book*, which has sold over 30 million copies since its first edition was published in 1930. A traditional community cookbook can be just as successful in your community or region as *Better Homes and Gardens® New Cook Book* is nationally. In order to be successful, however, traditional cookbooks need to be well-balanced from beginning to end. Include recipes which are easy to follow with accessible ingredients commonly found in your region.

Theme-Oriented Cookbooks

A theme-oriented cookbook focuses around an idea, a concept, an organization, an event, a worthy cause, a style of cooking, a time period, or an activity. Do you live in a region that is known for its unique cuisine? Use the cuisine as your theme. Is your group raising funds for a particular cause? Use the cause as your theme. Consider healthier versions of familiar recipes or outdoor grilling. Theme-oriented cookbooks can include recipes for all types of food from appetizers to desserts, or it can be based simply on a certain type of food, such as side dishes.

Wild-N-Tame, Fish-N-Game, The Hunter’s Cookbook by Lynn Mitchell Moore is an example of a theme-oriented cookbook. Included is information on field dressing, butchering, preservation, cooking, and freezing of fish and wild game. The cover, fillers, and dividers feature photos and drawings of wild game and fish. Another example, the *Junior League of Chicago Cookbook*, centers on the four seasons – foods for spring, summer, fall, and winter. At the time it was published, no similar cookbooks were available, and it became instantly popular.

The best way to choose a theme is based on your experiences. Author Kurt Vonnegut once said, “I myself find that I trust my own writing most, and others seem to trust it most, too, when I sound like a person from Indianapolis, which is what I am.” That concept holds true for any author; your cookbook will only be believable if you write from personal experience.

What particular experiences stand out in your mind? Perhaps you are from the Northwest, and memories of your grandmother's wonderful wild-berry pies swim in your head, and thus the beginnings of a wonderful wild-berry pie cookbook. You may be a working mother who has adapted the recipes for traditional, family-style dishes so they can be prepared in under 15 minutes – the result is a cookbook with quick and easy recipes for busy families.

A theme may be based on food trends or fads. If you follow advertising, you will begin to notice trends and fads. Trends usually last between five to ten years and offer clues to what society is currently demanding. Fads are much shorter lived, one to three years, and may occur regionally, as well as nationally. Since fads come and go so quickly, use caution if choosing to publish a fad-oriented cookbook.

Food trends can be identified through trade publications, as well as cooking programs on television. *Cooking Light*®, *Fine Cooking*, and other cooking publications are excellent sources for identifying cooking trends. Women's magazines that contain recipes such as *Better Homes & Gardens*®, *Woman's Day*®, and *Ladies Home Journal*® will also help you identify trends in cooking. Trendy cookbooks are generally characterized by entertaining and interesting topics. These cookbooks can be very specific, such as chocolate desserts or cappuccinos. Many times, trends include interest in ethnic and regional foods; the public may want recipes from the Caribbean islands or Cajun country.

When writing or promoting a trendy cookbook, know the stage of the trend. Is it being introduced, growing, maturing, or declining? There are more risks involved if you develop a trendy cookbook in the early or declining stages of the trend cycle. After a trend has been established, you may approach it more boldly.

Developing a Theme

What is your earliest memory of food? What sort of things did your parents or grandparents cook for you? What were their best dishes – those that make your mouth water even now as you think of them? Were there any special family dining traditions – holiday meals or unusual foods that none of your friends had in their homes? When did you start to cook? How and what do you cook now? Where do you like to eat out? What's your favorite way to entertain? Do you follow any special diets? The answers to these questions will help you develop your theme. Develop a cookbook theme you're passionate about.

When you have identified a theme you think is a good idea for a cookbook, try your best to weigh its marketability. Unless your cookbook project is simply a personal effort with no concern for making money, you must do additional market research before investing the money to create a cookbook. Ask your friends if they would buy the cookbook. More importantly, get the opinions of people in the business. Talk to bookstore owners and managers. Ask them if they have seen books of this theme and how they sold. Also, ask them where the best places would be to make the cookbook available to possible buyers. If you are trying to reach a certain audience, you must place your book where it is accessible to those buyers.

Parts of Your Cookbook

Marketing your cookbook involves identifying its valuable aspects. Your cookbook style will spark buyers' interest, but the recipes and theme must be consistent and well represented throughout your book. Marketable aspects of your cookbook include theme-oriented information, recipes, non-recipe content, and the cover.

Theme-Oriented Information

Many people buy cookbooks not only for the recipes, but for their reading pleasure. Therefore, why not include interesting information, in addition to the recipes? Is your cookbook traditional? Include historical information about the recipes or explain why the recipe is important to your traditional way of cooking. You might want to include historical, cultural, or ethnic information about your group which would interest your market. If your cookbook is based on a theme, include interesting information on that theme.

Photographs and illustrations complementing your theme add a nice touch to a cookbook. With Morris Press Cookbooks, you can use photos very effectively in your opening pages and dividers. Black and white photos are the most economical. Multiple or full-color photos on dividers are almost prohibitive in cost unless you are printing a large quantity of books.

Recipe Content

Recipes should be what the cover claims they will be. If you are writing a cookbook featuring low carb recipes, include a good variety of recipes that provide nutritional content, including carb grams per serving. If you have a traditional cookbook, make sure you cover even the simplest of traditional recipes. Use recipes that are easy to understand with ingredients that are easy to

find. Are your recipes tested? If so, mention it in the front pages of the cookbook. Your group can have great fun with this aspect of your cookbook. Keep track of preparation time, alterations to the recipes, and results.

Some people collect cookbooks because of one recipe in the cookbook. Celebrity recipes on a national, regional, and even local level can generate sales. If you or your group has access to award winning recipes, be sure to include them in your cookbook, e.g., Winner of the Texas Chili Cook-off (if the potential donor is willing to share his or her secret recipe).

Be sure your recipes are clear to the reader; you should include pan sizes, preparation time, preheating instructions, and other pertinent information. Also, use consistent measurements – do not use “1/2 cup margarine” in one recipe and “1 stick margarine” in another. State if the peas should be fresh or frozen – assume your reader knows nothing about cooking. Also, to be accessible to cooks at various levels of experience, your recipes should vary in complexity (unless your cookbook is targeted specifically toward beginning or experienced cooks).

Non-Recipe Content

Cooks love special tidbits with a recipe such as nutritional information, contributor information, suggested uses, or recipe history, such as ethnic origination, just to name a few. Non-recipe content that appears with a specific recipe is often of great interest to readers and cooks.

Recipe Notes add cost to your cookbook but may contribute valuable information and reading enjoyment. You may want to include recipe history, uses, or nutritional information such as calories, protein, carbohydrates, fat, cholesterol, etc. Information on food safety, recipe variations, and high-altitude cooking is also helpful.

Fillers are another additional cost that can add value to your cookbook. If your recipe layout includes non-continued recipes (recipes that are not split from one page to the next), there are often spaces where you can add fillers such as quotes, group history, ethnic information, or artwork that complement your theme. This type of information sprinkled throughout your cookbook adds interest and enjoyment.

Acknowledgements, introduction, bibliography, and other important information should also be included. State in the front of your cookbook the price and where additional copies may be purchased, or include a mail order page in the back of your book for convenient ordering. You may also want to include special cooking hints, garnishing tips, and napkin folding ideas. By including cooking hints, your cookbook will be the one used time and time again. Morris Press Cookbooks has developed a charming set of cooking hints which can be placed in your cookbook at no extra charge.

Cover Yourself

It has often been said, “The cover sells the book.” Morris Press Cookbook experts and other professionals agree the cover is a significant selling factor. Booksellers will tell you that a new book with an attractive, eye-catching cover sells out much faster than a similar book with a less appealing cover.

Your cookbook will be competing with many other cookbooks, so make it stand out. Design several covers and show them to as many people as possible. Get feedback and be objective; what you may consider an attractive, eye-catching cover may not appeal to others. A full-color cover will not add much to the printing cost; however, covers do not need to be full-color to be eye-catching. The payback of an attractive cookbook cover is well worth the extra effort and cost.

Your Target Market

Identify the type of people who would be willing to buy your cookbook. This group of people is your target market, the group to whom you should direct the majority of your advertising and public relations information.

The following characteristics are common among cookbook buyers:

- Three out of 10 women collect cookbooks, with over 300,000 serious collectors in the American market.
- 68% of cookbook buyers are women.
- College-educated buyers own twice as many cookbooks as those with a high school education.
- Women with a higher income will spend more for hardback cookbooks.

A census report, located in your local library, could provide more specific information if you choose to limit your market to a particular region or the counties in your area.

Keep in mind that the above description is true for the average cookbook buyer. However, your cookbook may be targeted differently. Learn as much as possible about your target market. Find out what they like, what their current interests are, and what cookbook features or themes appeal to them. You must make these people aware of your cookbook, creating in them a desire to purchase your book.

Pricing Your Cookbook

Setting the right price and making a profit is your goal. You may have speculated about how many books need to be sold to reach your desired profit. The right price should cover your costs and attract buyers. Your target market and the style and features of your cookbook are the primary factors in price setting. If you set your price too high, or even too low, your target market may not buy your cookbook.

Cookbooks as a category account for 25% of sales in the national book industry, and 20% of all cookbooks sold in stores are community cookbooks with proceeds going to charitable causes. To set your price, get an idea of what your competitors are doing. Shop around to see how other cookbooks compare to yours in size, style, number of recipes, artwork, type of cover, and price. Pick those books most similar to yours and those that have the same target market. This will help you determine what the market is willing to spend. Morris Press Cookbooks also offers suggested selling prices, located with the price charts. If optional features are added, double that feature's cost and add it to the suggested price.

In general, publishers agree community cookbooks priced under \$15 sell more quickly than similar cookbooks with a higher price. However, buyers know a larger cookbook like *Better Homes and Gardens® New Cook Book*, which includes 541 pages and 1,200 recipes, is a bargain even in the \$25 price range. Buyers often depend on reputation when selecting their purchases.

A Morris Press Cookbooks customer, Alice Laue, has had huge success in selling her own cookbook. People are willing to pay the above average price of \$24.95 for her cookbook, which has 1,179 recipes. Known in her local area as a fabulous cook, her cookbook has gained an outstanding reputation because of its easy-to-prepare recipes, which use common ingredients, with results of great tasting dishes. Her cookbook contains 16 categories, ranging from simple beverages and dips to more elaborate main dishes and desserts. Her sales success came primarily from word of mouth. To date, she has sold over 7,500 copies. Alice is just one of the thousands of success stories each year.

Consider all your costs when pricing your cookbook: advertising, distribution, storage, packaging, taxes, and shipping. Don't neglect packaging for your cookbooks. If you ship to individuals, wholesalers, or retailers, books must arrive in excellent condition. Shipping boxes or padded envelopes are the best packaging. For quantities of 200 or more, you may wish to contact Midwest Box Company at 800-888-8269. For smaller quantities, Morris Press Cookbooks offers point-of-purchase counter displays, shipping boxes, and padded envelopes.

You also need to be aware of how your profit margin is affected by using wholesalers or sales representatives. You will gain exposure through a representative, but you will also have to share your profits and often may have to buy back any unsold books. A retailer generally buys your book for 40% off the retail price. A representative or wholesaler will get an additional 15% off. Combined, this results in a 55% discount off your retail price. Some book representatives will pay for shipping costs, while others may request that you pay shipping. Your profit is the difference between the discounted price and your cost. As you can see, direct sales are most profitable.

Public Relations

Public relations are a collection of impressions about you or your organization and its members – it is communicating with the public about your organization's accomplishments and ultimately your product. Some call it free promotion. Non-profit organizations have limited promotional budgets, and yet they do things the public needs to know about. Fortunately, there are several ways to reach the public without using significant funds.

Once your target market and cookbook price have been determined, the next step is finding ways to reach your customers. There are endless ways to contact your audience, and you must determine the ways that work best for your situation. The promotional tactics and level of success of your cookbook are determined by your group's effort.

After some general discussion about your cookbook, write three paragraphs about its features and benefits. This will help formulate advertising copy and press releases and will serve as the groundwork for future promotions. Do not be afraid to begin. You may need to write several drafts before finding one that efficiently promotes your cookbook.

Press Releases

The press release is the most accepted method of conveying information to the media; it is your avenue to relay newsworthy information to the press. A press release should be concise – ideally no more than a page in length. It should be typed and double spaced. Press releases are intended to spark the media’s interest in your story or activity. By giving the media the facts of your story, you are inviting them to discover more about it.

When writing a press release:

- On the top of your page, state “For Immediate Release” or your intended release date.
- Include a contact name, address, and phone number near the top so reporters can contact the appropriate person.
- Provide a snappy headline.
- Write the release in third person, as if someone else were writing about you. Write in first person only when you are being quoted.
- Use short, concise sentences and paragraphs. The first paragraph should only be one or two sentences of 25-30 words. It should contain the most important information and hook the reader into reading the rest of the story.
- Make it read like a standard news story, not an ad. Include the answers to who, what, when, where, why, and how.
- Include sample recipe titles and a footnote indicating sample recipes are available if the editor has room to publish them.
- If you have them, include short excerpts of your published cookbook reviews.

The best resource for finding a press release mailing list is the *Gale Directory of Publications and Broadcast Media*. This directory lists addresses and phone numbers of newspapers and radio and television stations nationwide. You can find this directory at your local library, by calling Gale at 800-877-GALE, or by writing:

Gale Research
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535

If you feel your cookbook will have a regional interest, send press releases to local and regional magazines, such as *Midwest Living*®, *Southern Living*®, or *Yankee*®. Your cookbook may have national appeal. If so, you may want to send a release to national trade and women’s magazines, such as *Bon Appetit*, *Cooking Light*®, *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman’s Day*®, *Better Homes and Gardens*®, or *Redbook*.

For the majority of organizations selling community cookbooks, sending a press release to churches, schools, fraternal organizations, or trade groups for use in their local newsletter is a must. Also, send your information to other levels or chapters of your own organization. You can contact your local chamber of commerce for a list of local newsletters.

Local and regional press release distribution hint list:

- Request to be placed in the food, “What’s New,” or social section; you will reach those interested in cooking.
- Aim to have the release printed in weekend editions. People have more time to read on weekends; they also have more time to get to your sales location.
- Send releases to newspapers and radio and TV stations two weeks in advance of your intended release date.
- Send releases to magazines at least two months ahead of your intended release date.

Some magazines, newspapers, and newsletters may have a column devoted to cooking or local fundraising efforts. If you want to be listed in a column like this, you should include a letter regarding the specific column in which you want your information to appear. Enclose three to five of your favorite recipes in their entirety and a cookbook or a good color photograph of your cover, in case they would be interested in reviewing your cookbook or including a picture of it. If you don’t send a cookbook, state that review copies are available upon request. We highly recommend sending review copies to magazines. You should reserve a specific number of cookbooks to be used for review copies.

Public Service Announcements

If you are raising funds for a charitable cause, a public service announcement (PSA) is an alternate way to let people know about it through the media. If you are able to target your PSA correctly, it communicates a message on behalf of a good cause to your intended audience, as well as others. PSAs are offered free of charge with the media donating their space or time.

Write introductory letters to the media, and make follow-up phone calls. Some TV and radio stations may turn you down, but if they agree, this can be an excellent way to reach the public.

Why PSAs?

- People are more likely to buy your product if they know the proceeds are going to a charitable cause.
- You can gain more exposure and increase your sales potential.
- It saves you promotion money.
- You are promoting your cause, as well as your project.
- Your group will be perceived in a favorable light.
- The image of the TV or radio station running your PSA will be improved by supporting your cause.

Cookbook Contests

To gain prize-winning recognition for your cookbook and organization, you can enter your cookbook, or recipes from it, in cooking contests. Many contest opportunities exist locally, regionally, and nationally. Your winning entries will promote cookbook sales. Many times, state agricultural check-off programs sponsor contests, such as beef, pork, and wheat cook-offs. Any winning recognition will spark interest and add great value to your cookbook.

The newsletter, *Cooking Contest Chronicle*, is a great source for nationwide and local contests, as well as winning recipes. This newsletter contains information on cooking contests, prize-winning recipes, tips and guidelines, relevant food trends, and cookbook reviews. It is published monthly and has a subscription rate of \$19.95 per year. To learn more, contact:

Cooking Contest Chronicle
Karen Martis
P.O. Box 10792
Merrillville, IN 46411-0792

McIlhenny Company has unique contest opportunities exclusively for community non-profit organizational cookbooks that have documented sales of 100,000 or more copies. Organizations may submit their cookbook to be considered for the Hall of Fame. McIlhenny Company, the maker of Tabasco® pepper sauce, also sponsors the annual Tabasco® Community Cookbook Awards. Six regional winners, New England, Mid-Atlantic, South, Midwest, West, and Southwest, are chosen along with three national winners. To receive a contest entry form or for additional information, go to their web site, www.tabasco.com, or send a self-addressed stamped envelope to:

The Tabasco® Community Cookbook Awards
c/o Hunter & Associates
41 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10010-2202

Morris Community Cookbook Awards

The Morris Community Cookbook Awards recognize the best cookbooks that Morris Press Cookbooks has printed and honor the organizations that have dedicated their efforts to charitable causes. Enter and win even more money for your fundraising project. First place will receive \$3,000, second place will receive \$1,500, and third place will receive \$750. All winners will receive a plaque, stickers for their books, and national recognition. For more details, call us at 800-445-6621 or visit our web site, www.morriscookbooks.com.

Cooking Schools

A variety of cooking classes are often affiliated with gourmet stores, community colleges, or adult education programs. Instructors for the classes may be willing to use recipes from your cookbook in one of the lessons. If your cookbook is used, provide the instructor with purchasing information. Gourmet stores may even be interested in selling your cookbook if they like it well enough to feature your recipes in their cooking classes.

Community Calendars & Programs

A community calendar usually announces events that are open to the public. If you hold an event promoting the sale of your cookbook, community calendars on local TV or radio stations can be an excellent avenue by which your group can advertise. Do not ignore the possibility of cable TV. Many local cable stations incorporate community calendars and will list upcoming events. To request that your event be announced, send a press release two weeks in advance to the station's community affairs director and be sure to include:

- Group name
- Date, time, place, and purpose of event
- Group contact name and phone number
- Event description
- Cost, if any

Many stations produce community and consumer news during their regular broadcasts. Inquire about the possibility of being interviewed during a special weekly feature such as the noon show or a cooking segment. Contact the program director and suggest your story.

Web Sites

The world wide web is an innovative way to promote your cookbook without spending much money. You may want to create your own web site or arrange to have your cookbook promoted on existing sites. Morris Press Cookbooks offers customers a free listing of their cookbook for up to three months on our web site that is dedicated to selling cookbooks.

Cookbooks4sale.com (also accessible through cookbooksforsale.com) gives cookbook enthusiasts the opportunity to purchase your unique cookbook.

Your “Cookbooks 4 Sale” listing will include:

- Cookbook title and cover photo
- Number of recipes and binding style
- Organization name
- Cookbook description
- Special features of your cookbook
- Featured recipe complete with ingredients and instructions
- Cost and ordering information
- What profit will be used for (opt.)

At cookbooks4sale.com, cyber-shoppers can browse through cookbooks by category or by state. Your cookbook will be listed under your organization’s name and state, as well as two categories of your choice, giving shoppers four opportunities to find your book. Cookbooks4sale.com lists *your* address, phone number, e-mail, and the name of *your* contact person for ordering information. This way, payments and orders come directly to you – you keep all profits.

Paid Advertising

For more exposure, you may want to consider paid advertising if you have a need and the funds. Promotion through paid advertising gives you more control over advertisement copy, position, and frequency. On the down side, it’s often difficult to sell enough books to cover advertising costs. What is the best paid advertising avenue for your cookbook? An overview of major media sources should provide you with enough background to guide you in spending your advertising dollars.

Newspaper

Newspaper is the oldest and most traditional of the media types. Newspapers have a high pass-along rate – one person may buy it and read it and pass it to someone else. This way, your message is seen by many people. Coupons in newspaper ads also give your message a long shelf life; they can be clipped and saved. Also, special sections, such as cooking, are often kept by the consumer.

Newspaper Hints:

- Tall, thin ads place your headline above others.
- The best location is on the far right side of a right-hand page.
- Spot color and white space attract attention.
- Ads in the food, social, or entertainment section will have the best chance of reaching your target market.

Radio

If your target audience is working women, radio is a good way to reach them. The radio is often on during the drive to work, at the workplace, and again on the drive home. In homes, however, the radio is often replaced by television.

Radio Hints:

- Women are the largest radio listening crowd during the day.
- Radio programming is set up according to format (country, rock, easy listening).
- Buy air time around cooking, food, or news broadcasts.
- Ads are most affordable from January to August.

Television

Network television has the power to reach the largest number of people. However, television is costly; therefore, to reduce your costs, first try PSAs, community calendars, and other free television promotions. Cable television has its advantages compared to network television. Nearly 60% of American households subscribe to cable television, and advertisements are less expensive because the market is more dispersed.

TV Hints:

- Women watch television the most during the afternoon and prime time.
- News programs effectively reach the general public.
- More television is watched during winter months.
- Advertising rates are lowest from January to March.
- Best buys are during cooking or talk shows and morning news programs.

Magazines

Magazine advertisements are beneficial because magazines are a very targeted medium. Advertising representatives can often give you very detailed information about the type of market to which they cater. Although magazine advertisements are expensive, many have a classified advertisement section. Classified ad prices vary but are usually in the range of \$7-15 per word.

Direct Mail

Direct mail is an excellent advertising medium and a great way to reach distributors and retailers. Responses from direct mail are usually fast and easily measured. There is little competition with direct mail since you are not competing with an advertisement placed next to yours.

It is a good idea to include a copy of your cookbook along with your flyer to *major* distributors. Many will not consider carrying your cookbook unless they have a review copy. Follow-up on the mailing and perhaps even call them before you give away a copy of your cookbook. You can include a reply card if you don't want to give away a book. This is a postcard an advertiser or distributor can return to you to request a review copy, allowing you to only give books to those interested in receiving them.

A response rate to direct mail of 1.5–3% is considered good. That means if you send out 1,000 flyers, you receive 15-30 responses. If you are planning on several large mailings, you may want to invest in a bulk mail permit to keep your postage expenses down. In order to receive the bulk mail price, you must have a minimum of 200 pieces for each mailing, and you must bag and sort mail according to postal requirements. There are businesses that provide direct mail service, and generally you can use their permit, or your post office can supply you with this information and the cost of the permit.

If you decide to use direct mail, there are several factors to keep in mind:

- Design a quality flyer. A flyer is usually 8 1/2" x 11" and printed on colored paper using one ink, or if you have the funds, print a full-color flyer. Include a cookbook photo, details such as retail price, discounts, and a list of features.
- If you are near a local college or university, find out if they offer any graphic design classes. Ask the instructor if he/she would be willing to use your flyer as a class project. This will give students experience and give you free design help.
- Direct the copywriting toward the buyer. Tell them why it is a good cookbook to carry in their store. Mention any promotions or publicity affiliated with your cookbook.
- Try to make your mailing personalized. With a computer mail-merge program, you can easily generate personalized labels, letters, and envelopes.
- Make a good offer, such as a better discount if ordered within a month, free shipping on orders of 20 cookbooks, or a free display box with 20 or more books.
- A good list is essential to a successful mailing campaign. Be prepared to spend time on your list, making sure names and addresses are correct. You may also look in specialized directories of professional associations and organizations or business listings in service directories.

If you have decided on purchasing a direct mail list, we recommend contacting American Business Information (ABI). Even if you are undecided on whether or not you would like to use the direct mail approach, you may ask them for a free catalog which will provide information on specific lists and quantity of listings available. Their web address is www.infoUSA.com.

American Business Information
5711 South 86th Circle
P.O. Box 27347
Omaha, NE 68127
800-555-5335

Cookbook Newsletters

Cookbook newsletters are a unique medium – they have the power to reach the exact audience you are interested in, and often the cost of placing an advertisement is minimal.

Cookbook Collector is a 32-page, digest-sized newsletter that is distributed quarterly. It is home-based and has at least 125 sample recipes from the 25 or more cookbooks which are reviewed each issue.

The Cookbook Collector
1443 Sunset Drive
Bogalusa, LA 70427
Contact: Mildred Camp
504-732-4193

The Cookbook Collectors' Exchange is a bimonthly newsletter sent to 7,500 cookbook collectors. You may purchase advertising space (free to subscribers), and may also have your cookbook reviewed if you submit a free copy of your book. Call for more information.

The Cookbook Collectors' Exchange
P.O. Box 89
Magalia, CA 95954
530-873-4311
Contact: Sue Erwin

Cookbooks Unlimited is a monthly newsletter of the Cookbook Collector's Club, a national organization with 200 members. Advertising prices vary, so call for information.

Cookbooks Unlimited
Otentto Books
4756 Terrace Drive
San Diego, CA 92116-2514
619-281-8962 (6 - 9 p.m. PST)
Contact: Barbara Gelink

Distribution Methods

Many individuals and groups sell their cookbooks through stores. There are many ways to reach stores and other retailers. If you plan to sell your book in grocery stores or major book stores (especially chains), you may need to file for an ISBN and a bar code. Call us for details.

Retailer Accounts

The first step in distribution is to design a data sheet and price list for possible retail accounts. A data sheet is a single sheet of paper with a photo or good illustration of your cookbook. Include a listing of your cookbook's features, benefits, dimensions, number of pages, recipes, shipping weight, and any other pertinent information. Keep your price list separate in case price changes are made in the future.

Create a list of all the shops and stores in your area that may purchase your cookbook. When you call upon these stores, bring a copy of your cookbook and ask for the store manager or the person in charge of buying. Be prepared to leave your cookbook data sheet along with prices. Retailers are accustomed to receiving 40% off retail price; however, they may be willing to take less for a cookbook with proceeds going to a charitable cause.

Types of businesses to call on:

- Gourmet food shops and health stores
- Cookware boutiques
- Department stores with gourmet food or kitchenware departments
- Gift shops
- Bookstores
- Museums and other tourist attractions
- Other places women frequent, such as daycares, salons, grocery stores, exercise and fitness centers, and banks.

Cookbook Catalogs

Another excellent way to sell cookbooks is through cookbook distributor catalogs. The following are distributors you may want to contact. Each distributor has its own payment terms and wholesale price requirements. The catalogs listed are provided as a resource and not an endorsement.

BookLooks Health & Fitness Catalog specializes in vegetarian cookbooks and is mailed two times a year to major accounts and people who request a catalog. Terms are 60% off retail price, and you pay shipping costs to their warehouse. Send a sample copy of your cookbook for review.

BookLooks Catalog
c/o Teach Services, Inc.
254 Donovan Road
Brushton, NY 12916
Phone: 518-358-2125
www.tsibooks.com
Contact: Wayne Reid

The Cookbook Collection deals with community and specialty cookbooks and is a national distributor for non-profit organizations and self-publishers. The catalog can be ordered from their web site. We suggest you call them for terms.

The Cookbook Collection
2500 East 195th Street
Belton, MO 64012
Phone: 816-322-2122
Fax: 816-322-8086
www.cookbookstore.com
E-mail: info@cookbookstore.com
Contact: Larry Eveler

Dot Gibson Distributing mails a catalog once a year to a list of 10,000 book buyers, retailers, and consumers, reaching all 50 states. They also attend major gift and book buyer's shows. They carry cookbooks from large publishers, as well as individuals, specializing in non-profit organizational cookbooks such as Junior Leagues, service leagues, and other organizations. Terms are 55% off retail, and they won't return any unsold cookbooks. There is a fee of \$50 for the first year and \$40 for subsequent years to cover photo and production charges. Send a sample copy of your cookbook for review.

Dot Gibson Distributing
P.O. Box 117
Waycross, GA 31502
Phone: 912-285-2848
www.dotgibson.com
E-mail: info@dotgibson.com
Contact: Dot Gibson

Southwest Cookbook Distributors mails its catalog in May to 15,000 retail outlets, with periodic updates every three months. Their circulation covers all fifty states and Canada, and they take their cookbooks to market. Their terms are 55% off retail price, and you pay freight and a fee to list your cookbook. Send a sample copy of your cookbook for review.

Southwest Cookbook Distributors
1430 Texas Ave.
Bonham, TX 75418
Phone: 800-725-8898
Fax: 800-725-2522
www.swcookbook.com
E-mail: info@swcookbook.com
Contact: Brandi Stockton

Web Sites

Some companies conduct sales solely on the web. Books-for-cooks.com is one such company. You may want to contact them about the possibility of carrying your cookbook.

books-for-cooks.com
410-997-2731
E-mail: info@books-for-cooks.com

Cookbook Distributors

Cookbook distributors are a more aggressive way to reach retailers. They have a sales force that works hard to make your cookbook available in stores. Contact buyers at book and specialty stores in your area and find out which reputable distributors they work with.

Besides national distributors, local and regional distributors should be called upon. This could include food wholesalers whose representatives would call on their accounts, such as grocery stores, convenience stores, and restaurants. Most representatives are streetwise and can place your cookbooks in unlikely places. They will try to sell them wherever there is an opportunity.

For further information on wholesalers and distributors, please consult *Literary Marketplace*, which can be found in the reference department of your local public library. Also, the American Wholesale Booksellers Association publishes an annual membership directory which includes members' terms, policies, fields of specialization, and services. You may obtain a copy of this directory by contacting:

American Wholesale Booksellers Association
702 South Michigan
South Bend, IN 46601
219-232-8500

Giftware Tradeshows

Many book distributors exhibit their books at giftware and book buyers tradeshows. If you have a distributor for your book, and they are attending a show, make sure they are displaying your book. Tradeshows are an important avenue in selling your cookbook on a regional or even national level. *Tradeshow Week Data Book* is a comprehensive listing of national and international tradeshows. Check your local library, or to purchase the book call 800-375-4212.

More Promotional Ideas

Promotional Party

If you or other members of your group are not enthusiastic about hitting the streets to call on retail stores in your area, there is a solution – bring the prospects to you. Hold a food party so guests can sample recipes from your book. Name the party after the theme of your cookbook and decorate accordingly.

Create a list of the accounts you would like to call on to sell your cookbooks. Do not forget banks and businesses that may possibly use a cookbook as a premium for new accounts. Obtain the name of the person who makes the buying decisions and send an invitation with an RSVP card enclosed. Invite the press for free publicity, and be ready to take orders at the party!

Promotional Tie-Ins

Promotional tie-ins can be a blockbuster for sales. A tie-in is marketing your product with another. Your cookbook should complement, not compete with, the other product. Some ideas for this type of distribution include a complementary bread cookbook with a purchase of a bread maker or a beverage cookbook with a blender. You would have to contact the desired product's manufacturer to negotiate and organize this type of arrangement.

An example of a successful promotional tie-in is Roy Benjamin's microwave cookbook. This cookbook was distributed as a premium with sales of Sears and Kenmore microwave ovens. Benjamin's cookbook sold 15 million copies. Another example is *Better Homes and Gardens® Hot and Spicy Chili* cookbooklet put together with Alka-Seltzer®. Ten thousand of these displays were distributed throughout supermarkets and drugstores.

Even more sensational is the promotional tie-in of gourmet cook Kathleen Fish, who self-published her first cookbook, *Monterey's Cooking Secrets*. Fish, through a turn of events, self-financed the development and manufacturing of products to complement her line of cookbooks. Her cookbook and food product sets are now sold at stores such as Neiman-Marcus and Nordstrom. Granted, these examples are of a grand scale; tie-ins can be done at the local level. Find local manufacturers or stores that could tie in your cookbook with one of their products.

Brainstorming Ideas

As you can see, the avenues of public relations and promotion are endless. This list of 20 inexpensive promotions are just a few more ideas. As you read through this list and brainstorm with your group, you may think of many more that can be tailored specifically to your cookbook.

1. Set up a display table at a cooking trade show, your organization's convention, or a public event related to your cause. Also, consider public events such as fairs, carnivals, craft shows, school programs, and church events.
2. If your cause is appropriate, approach local grocery stores or dairy companies and ask if they will put a public service message on their packages. Many people read grocery bags while at the store and milk cartons while eating breakfast.
3. Put together a public service message in the form of a quiz, game, or puzzle on place mats for area restaurants.
4. Sponsor a chili feed, bake sale, garage sale, car wash, or another event which attracts the public. Be sure to have a display with plenty of cookbooks available for sale.
5. Host a fundraising dinner using the purchase of your cookbook as admission. Be sure to serve recipes from your cookbook.
6. Set up displays in banks, public buildings, and retail stores specializing in gourmet items and kitchen accessories.
7. Offer cookbooks to local hotels and restaurants, and ask them to feature some of your recipes as specials (be sure they identify where the recipes came from). Have cookbooks available for sale at the restaurant hostess counter or gift shop.
8. Produce a short video to be shown in public places, for example, "How to Bake Double-Fudge Cream Cheese Brownies." To keep costs down, ask for production help from a broadcast journalism student at a nearby college.
9. Place group volunteers on the street, handing out literature about your organization, cause, and cookbook promotion.
10. Design displays or posters advertising your cookbook and place them inside grocery stores, banks, churches, or your workplace.
11. Provide promotional flyers for local merchants to place inside their customer's shopping bags.
12. Ask your local utility company to include your flyer with its bills.
13. Ask about complimentary ads in local magazines or newspapers.
14. Trade advertising space with another organization's newsletter.
15. Ask about free printing and distribution of materials by local corporations – try for underwriting.
16. Compile a mini-cookbook with preplanned menus – use as a giveaway. Include information on purchasing your cookbook.
17. Use banks as money drops for your special fundraising project. Give a book away to everyone that contributes a certain monetary amount to your cause.
18. Have banks give away your cookbook as a premium for every new account opened; let the bank buy your cookbooks at the wholesale price.
19. Demonstrate the preparation of a recipe at a location where the books are sold. If cooking is not possible, have some items already made and offer samples and index cards with the recipe name and how the cookbook can be obtained.
20. Establish your cookbook as the community project of an advertising, graphic arts, or marketing class at a nearby college. Students could develop advertising and marketing strategies, and even design advertisements and brochures free or for a nominal fee. Use other clubs for extra manpower and publicity ideas. This results in experience for students – something to add to their portfolio or resume.

Final Considerations

This book has discussed many ways to advertise and market your cookbook. Whether you are beginning to write a new cookbook or promoting an existing one, this guide should help point you in the right direction. Some information may not pertain to your cookbook. Choose those that you feel would best reach your intended audience and incorporate them into your marketing plan. Good luck!