

How to Make Buyers

Notice Your Food Product



Creating an effective sell sheet

You have a great food product. You've done the research – you know your food product fills an important niche in the marketplace. But given today's competitive retail environment, it's a challenge to get to the people who count – retailers, wholesalers, distributors, etc. – to choose your food product over recognized brands that have performed well in the past.

So what's the secret to getting their attention?
Create an effective sell sheet.

What is a sell sheet?

A sell sheet is an advertisement of your food product that you present to potential buyers. It should be short, simple and direct. Buyers shouldn't have to take a lot of time to search the page to find the information they're looking for. Ideally, your sell sheet should:

- provide buyers with the information they need to list your food product
- clearly identify the product – for example: if it's a box of cookies, display your box of cookies
- demonstrate who your target audience is – for example: if it's young children, make your packaging playful and fun

- tell consumers what makes your product special or unique (Why would someone choose your product over another brand?)
- provide key selling points (It's extremely important these selling points show the benefits to your customer, the buyer. Only include information that is relevant to the trade.)

How do I create a sell sheet?

Use a desktop publishing program. When printing the sell sheet, be sure to use quality paper and a good colour printer. This will allow you to make any changes, additions or deletions and print smaller quantities, as needed.

What information should I include on a sell sheet?

Include everything that will help the reader make an informed buying decision. Include the following information – **from top to bottom.**

1. eye-catching headline

A good headline grabs the reader's attention. It states – in a few well-chosen words – what you are offering customers, why you are telling them about your food product, and how it can benefit them. Your company logo should never be a headline.

For the purposes of this fact sheet, the word '**buyer**' refers to all potential food buyers, including grocers, category managers, department managers, store managers, wholesalers, distributors etc.

2. attractive product photo

A clear, colourful, high-resolution picture of your food product and packaging is a must. Buyers want to see exactly what they're purchasing. Photos of food products should look fresh and inviting, and make the buyer eager to sample your product.

3. three to four key benefits (not features) for buyers

The benefits important to consumers are very different than the benefits important to buyers, who are purchasing your food product for resale. Each group has entirely different motivations for buying your product. When choosing your key benefits, make sure you are targeting the right group. See *the difference between features and benefits on the next page*.

4. product detail chart

Your food product detail chart should include:

- product description¹ – Include how you want the information to appear on a grocery shelf label. For example: Gluten-free Gourmet Chocolate Chip Cookies.
- pack/size² – Include how many units are in a case and what is the measure of each unit.
- Universal Product Code (UPC)
- case code
- case cost³ – The case cost for all items in a line does not have to be the same. As shown in the example below, some product flavours are more expensive than others.
- suggested selling price (SSP)⁴ – It's the law that manufacturers cannot tell buyers what price to sell their product at – you can only suggest.
- gross margin⁵ – This number is calculated by: $(SSP - \text{unit cost}) \div SSP$.
- trade terms – This is the number of days within which you would like to receive your payment. For example: 30 days.

5. your contact information

6. trade terms, minimum order and turnaround time

7. your logo

NOTE: Never use your logo as a heading. It can take away from the attention-grabbing information in the headline.

What does a sell sheet look like?

Here is one example: Gluten-free Gourmet Chocolate Chip Cookies

Introducing NEW Gluten-free Gourmet Chocolate Chip Cookies

Grow your cookie category's sales and gross margin:

- Gluten-free preferred by 30% of consumers
- Kosher ingredients preferred by 40% of consumers
- Soft cookies are currently under-represented in the category
- Locally made using local ingredients; 78% of Manitobans would purchase a local product if it was sold where they regularly shop

Product Description	Pack/Size	Universal Product Code	Case Code	Case Cost	Unit Cost	Suggested Selling Price (SSP)	Gross Margin
Gluten-Free Chocolate Chip Cookies	12/250ml	0 12345 67860 1	1 00 12345 67860 7	\$ 39.56	\$ 3.30	\$ 4.99	33.9%
Gluten-Free Chocolate Chip Cookies	12/250ml	0 12345 67870 5	1 00 12345 67870 1	\$ 39.17	\$ 3.26	\$ 4.99	34.6%
Gluten-Free Peanut Butter Cookies	12/250ml	0 12345 67880 3	1 00 12345 67880 0	\$ 39.86	\$ 3.32	\$ 4.99	33.4%
Gluten-Free Chocolate Peanut Butter Cookies	12/250ml	0 12345 67890 7	1 00 12345 67890 4	\$ 39.55	\$ 3.30	\$ 4.99	34.0%

Turnaround: 3 days
 Minimum order: 2 cases
 Delivery: Included within the Perimeter of Winnipeg
 Terms: Net 30 days
 Demonstration and promotional support is available. Ask your representative.

Contact: Contact Name
 Phone: 204-555-5555
 Email: Name@companyname.com

List new COMPANY NAME Locally-Made Gluten-Free Cookie and grow your cookie category sales & profits today! Be on trend!

COMPANY LOGO

EXAMPLE OF PRODUCT DETAIL CHART

Product Description ¹	Pack/Size ²	Universal Product Code	Case Code	Case Cost ³	Unit Cost	Suggested Selling Price (SSP) ⁴	Gross Margin ⁵
Flavour 1	12/250ml	0 12345 67860 1	1 00 12345 67860 7	\$ 39.56	\$ 3.30	\$ 4.99	33.9%
Flavour 2	12/250ml	0 12345 67870 5	1 00 12345 67870 1	\$ 39.17	\$ 3.26	\$ 4.99	34.6%
Flavour 3	12/250ml	0 12345 67880 3	1 00 12345 67880 0	\$ 39.86	\$ 3.32	\$ 4.99	33.4%
Flavour 4	12/250ml	0 12345 67890 7	1 00 12345 67890 4	\$ 39.55	\$ 3.30	\$ 4.99	34.0%

Why should a company logo be at the bottom of a sell sheet?

Your company logo should be placed on the bottom right-hand side of the sell sheet as a closing to the document. There is no value in parading a brand that is relatively unknown at the top of the page – that will only take attention away from the heading and unique selling points of your food product.

What is the difference between features and benefits?

Features are about you and the physical attributes of your food product. They can include positive statements about your food product, like the taste, the type of ingredients, etc.– however, features DO NOT sell products as they have no connection to the customer.

Benefits are about the buyer. They represent the connection between the food product and its customers, such as: Why does the product matter to them? What will it do to make life easier for them? How can the product fix their problems? These are the kinds of benefits that motivate customers to buy a product.

The two tables below demonstrate the difference between **features** and **benefits**. **Table A** is directed at the consumer, while **Table B** is directed at the buyer.

TABLE A: Example of Potential Features vs. Benefits for a Consumer

Features	Benefits to the Consumer
Simple/home-made recipe	makes ingredient list easy to understand
Gluten-free ingredients	won't cause me digestive issues
Kosher ingredients	reinforces safety of ingredients because Kosher foods must undergo an additional level of inspection
Local ingredients	allows me to support my local economy to create jobs and wealth here at home
Soft cookie	gives me a greater sense of freshness and the feeling of eating home-made cookies straight from the oven
Re-sealable package	makes the cookies stay fresher longer, so I don't waste anything or end up eating stale cookies
Package is recyclable	reinforces the fact that I am an environmentally responsible person

Table B: Example of Potential Features vs. Benefits for a Buyer

Features	Benefits to the Buyer
Simple/homemade recipe	fits clean label trend sought X % of consumers today
Gluten-free ingredients	demanding by X % of consumers; as gluten-free trend continues to grow and families tend to participate
Kosher ingredients	represents attention to food safety – demanded by X % of consumers across all demographics
Local ingredients	are popular with consumers – X % of Manitobans said they would purchase a local food if it was available to them where they regularly shop
Soft cookie	caters to a niche in the market, as there are a limited number of soft cookie alternatives, which makes this product unique and helps grow the category
Re-sealable package	is on par with industry trend in packaging
Packaging is recyclable	appeals to consumers' desire to reduce their environmental footprint – X % of consumers demand products be recyclable

Should any additional information be included on a sell sheet?

Include all information that directly affects the order process. For example:

- delivery charges: Free within the perimeter of Winnipeg.
- payment terms: Net 30 days.
- turnaround time: The number of days between when you receive an order and when you will ship or deliver it to the customer. For example: three days.
- minimum order: Set a reasonable minimum, in cases that you would be willing to deliver or ship an order in accordance with the delivery charges you set. For example: two cases.

Do I need to include a call to action?

All sell sheets should include a strong call to action. What do you want the buyer to do after reading your sell sheet? Do you want them to call you? Visit your website? Make an appointment? You need to spell it out so the buyer knows what to do next. For example: Order now, Call (this number) today, Ask your representative, Buy now at this low introductory price, etc.

Make the contact information personal. It should always include the salesperson's name, direct phone number and email address. All phone messages and emails should be checked on a daily basis and returned within one business day.

Additional information to consider when creating a sell sheet:

- While it is fine to have different costs, it is expected that the suggested selling price be the same for a line of products.
- Follow an AIDA (Attention/Interest/Desire/Action) format to attract, create interest and convince your buyer the product will fill their customers' desires and satisfy their needs, which will lead to the customers' purchasing the product.
- Remember to proofread your sell sheet for typos, blurry pictures, text that drops off the page, spelling, grammar, etc. (It's a good idea to use Spell Check, but don't count on it to catch everything. You still need to proofread it closely.)
- Keep the font simple.
- Keep the layout simple – create sections or blocks of information. Always try to balance the visuals.
- Consider printing it on quality paper (a little heavier than standard printing paper) with a glossy finish.
- Think about taking your completed sell sheet to a graphic designer. Designers can add the finishing touches that will increase the professional look of your document.
- If you are presenting to a corporate retailer remove the case cost, suggested selling price and gross margin from your sell sheet. The case cost can be presented during the presentation. It is recommended to know your suggested selling price and gross margin but only discuss it with the buyer if they inquire about it.
- If you're working with a wholesale distributor and providing them with sell sheets for their sales reps to use, they may prefer that you do not include pricing information. Be sure to check with them on this point before supplying them with a large batch of sell sheets.



For more information

- Go to manitoba.ca/agriculture and click on Food and Ag Processing
- Email us at mbagrifood@gov.mb.ca
- Follow us on Twitter @MBGovAg
- Visit your local Manitoba Agriculture and Resource Development Office