

# The 'Big 1'

## First birthday celebrations can bring big sales

By Abby Heugel | Managing Editor

Whether or not you're a parent, you know the importance of a baby's 1st birthday (mostly because parents will tell you). Many will spare no expense and go to great lengths to ensure that they celebrate the "Big 1" with a variety of themed 1st birthday party supplies and decorations.

Even though themes and trends aren't important to the actual mini guest of honor, they often are to the parents who are trying to make everything just perfect. Because they're often busy, it's up to retailers to make everything parents need on trend and easily accessible, cementing your spot as the go-to store for all of the birthdays to come.

### Primary Colors

Jessica Benoit of Amscan said that moms aren't going the traditional color route anymore for babies' 1st birthday parties. They're seeing a lot of primary color schemes accented with splashes of pink or blue based on gender.

"One hot new theme for 2013 is 'Circus' and this bright multicolor palette is perfect for both boys and girls," Benoit said. "Amscan will be offering a fun new pattern for this theme in 2013: 'Fisher Price — 1st Birthday Circus' featuring a tiger ring master, an elephant and monkey and an iconic red/white striped circus tent."



The new Ocean Preppy pattern from Creative Converting is a best seller for both boy and girl 1st birthday parties.

They also offer the extras such as treat bags in the shape of a popcorn container, a 1st Birthday pennant banner and the specialty wearable Ring Master's "Big Top Hat" — all sure to transform a room into "One Big Top Party!" Adding Amscan's carnival games to a display can also tie in perfectly with this assortment — and add to your bottom line.

Brenda Fink of Party Magic in Godfrey, Ill. has also found customers are looking for bright colors for 1st birthdays, and that themes sell better than traditional licensed products.

"A lot of customers start with the baby shower and then do the same theme for the 1st birthday, such as Jungle, Monkey or Owls," Fink said.

"The new Ocean Preppy pattern from Creative Converting is our best seller for both boy and girl 1st birthday. They like this pattern because it is easy to work with ('Under the Sea'). It also has brighter colors like royal blue and lime green for boys and bright pink and lime green for girls.

"Other patterns that are popular include tractor/John Deere, Ladybug/black and red and Mickey and Minnie Mouse Clubhouse," Fink continued. "However, I've found Baby Mickey/Minnie doesn't sell as well for 1st birthday."

Lisa Bennett of Pioneer Balloon Co. said that while pink and blue color palettes with the prominent "1" are still very popular, they're also seeing the addition of polka dots and sparkle to baby products.

"Bling' isn't just for grown-ups anymore," Bennett said. "New holographic Qualatex balloons are perfect for decorating and many latex prints work well with current trends and color schemes. They also complement patterns on paper goods."

Bennett said that the classic characters that have been updated with bright, fun color palettes are going to continue to be very popular, such as jungle and zoo animals — especially monkeys with fun color schemes of brown, pink, lime green and blue; teddy bears with colorful patterns; and licensed characters like Mickey and Minnie Mouse and Winnie The Pooh.

She also added that an up-and-coming license for young children is Soft Spots, featuring six cuddly and colorful Dalmatian puppies.

### Just for You

Parents want to set their party apart from the rest, and one way to do that is with personalized party products. Fink said they customize



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Disney Cars 1st Birthday Table Decorating Kit from Amscan includes three free-standing cardstock centerpieces and 20 pieces of cardstock confetti shaped like "Cars" characters, checkered race flags and 1st place trophies.

birthday cake, so don't forget to add a High Chair Decorating Kit for that perfect photo opportunity."

Since most guests attending 1st birthday parties are a mixture of adults and older children, it is important to merchandise games and activities for the older kids at the party as well — display is key.

"Retailers need to offer comprehensive assortments that offer everything moms need to create the ultimate party," Benoit added. "The 'one-stop shop' offers customers multiple opportunities to select products that they didn't realize existed, and this will help increase the average sale."

Bennett said the best merchandising technique is to create a plan-o-gram that includes everything for the specific party theme in one place. Also, double face essential items like balloons, crepe paper and solid-color paper in their own sections. This method covers most everyone's shopping patterns when they think about party supplies, and the retailer also reaps the rewards of extra impulse sales with this convenient shopping approach.

Fink said they display all the tabletop ware, high chair kits and any coordinating cupcake liners, cupcake toppers, candles, cookie cutters, banners, solid color candy, custom bows and of course coordinating balloon centerpieces together to 'wow' the customers.

"Anyone can have plates, napkins and favors setting/hanging on a shelf," Fink said. "Cross merchandise with coordinating items and always have custom coordinating centerpieces with the designs. A great way is to have a table set with all the products, centerpieces and favors. Most customers cannot visualize how items will look together — especially how colors look together — but if they can see how great it all together, they will purchase all the products."

And if you can hook them for the "Big 1," you can score for years to come. **P**

products with sashes using #40 ribbon and Colorco letters and foil balloons with Just Write letters. Another popular item is candy — solid colors of M&M's, Sixlets and bubble gum to coordinate with the theme.

Bennett suggests using Microfoil animal "heads" to make fun, air-filled characters.

"Just tie two latex four-balloon clusters together and add a weight, then tie in the Microfoil Shape," she said. "You can add a message by tying on a helium-filled 18-inch Microfoil. These simple characters make a great display or cash-and-carry item."

Benoit added that other important products to include are letter banners, favors, games and activities. Hanging decorations such as paper lanterns and fluffies are very trendy right now and many styles of solid decorations can tie in with any color scheme.

"Giant personalized sign banners can be used for any party theme and can include any type of message," Benoit said. "And finally, every mother wants that picture of their child eating their



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