

# Spring Fair? We couldn't survive without it, says Black Ginger

The Paddison family – James, Annie and, more recently, son David – has been exhibiting at Spring Fair and Autumn Fair every year since the early Nineties.

Having helped to introduce, set up and establish two overseas companies in the UK and Ireland – Inspiration of Holland and Silea of France – they have become well known and popular figures around the NEC.

But it was not until 2007 that the Paddisons formed their own company, Black Ginger, which they launched at Spring Fair the following year.

“If you are a supplier in the UK home and gift industry, you *must* be at the Spring Fair,” says Annie. “Nowadays, we could not survive without it and the online presence of the show and its support is also extremely valuable.”

Although used to working from 200 square metre stands, their own range – which at that first show included a mix of ceramics that portrayed lifelike items such as cakes sandwiches and flowers, with matching paper napkins – was more compact.

So in 2008, with a 26 square metre stand in hall 7, they set about selling Black Ginger's first offering, which also featured fun candles, ceramic animals, Fresh Water Pearl jewellery and useful items such as watering cans, jugs, flower pots, money boxes, aprons and tea towels.

Annie comments: “We were thrilled with our launch and took on a lot of new customers – people we had been dealing with for many years and many new ones too.”

It was Black Ginger's napkins – new designs on good quality paper – that set them on the road to success. And Spring Fair 2008 was also to see the start of a craze that has spread to dining tables throughout the world with the introduction of their Party Game Napkins and titles such as Captain Davey's Treasure Hunt and Eat Your Way around the British Isles.

A surge in the sale of their smaller items – such as jewellery and accessories – may have obviated the need for a move the following year

to a larger, 42 square metre stand on the corner of a big aisle at Spring Fair.

"However, the position was great," says Annie. "Buyers said how easy we were to locate. Unfortunately, this was the Show of the Snow, a factor beyond anyone's control. But although our results were affected, sales were still excellent and we saw a huge increase on 2008. The most impressive thing was the number of new customers we took on – both at the show and afterwards."

From the outset, Black Ginger's aim has been to supply products suitable for the home market and provide a service that isn't reliant on the compliance of overseas companies. It also seeks to design products that achieve good price points – a strategy that the company believes has helped it through the recession.

Annie stresses that Spring Fair is the key component of its marketing plan: "The show is critical for a number of factors – not least to let our existing customers actually see the products and the quality – which is especially important with the jewellery – and for all the members of our team to actually put a face to that voice on the phone.

"Also, it is always a source of amazement that we can find so many new customers at *every* show! You think you know your geographical areas, but then more buyers turn up. Hooray for the Spring Fair!"

She says that the show is the perfect platform from which to launch Black Ginger's first new collection for the year. "Buyers expect to see new products. You have to keep moving – snooze and you lose."

- Alan Monahan

[ends]

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