



# Sunday Business

## Return policies will vary widely

Check out the rules with customer service before buying gifts

We all hope that the holiday gifts we painstakingly choose for our loved ones and friends are exactly what they want.

But realistically, that's not always the case. So in addition to that gift you thought was perfect, make sure that you check out return policies at stores so the recipient isn't in for an aggravating experience.

Store return policies are all over the place. Some stores offer only in-store credits, while others will process your return only if you have a gift receipt or purchase receipt. And then there are some stores that will take anything back - within reason - as long as they sell it.

Take advantage of gift receipts, which more retailers offer now. Gift receipts don't show the price you paid, but the codes on the receipt will let the clerk know how much you paid to make the return easier.

Also, make sure you read the store's return policies, which are usually posted by the customer service counter or at the register or even printed on your receipt. State law says stores can set their own return policy as long as it is clearly and conspicuously posted, said Attorney General spokeswoman Michelle Gatschell.

"Don't put yourself in a situation where you lose money because you didn't do your homework," she said.

But that doesn't mean that policies always seem fair or make sense to the shopper.

In September, Bernard and Lisa Daugherty of Ravenna ordered a dishwasher at the Best Buy in Cuyahoga Falls and paid about \$380 in cash. When they went to pick up their dishwasher, workers couldn't find it, so they were told they could either reorder or get a refund. They decided on the refund and were expecting \$380 in cash so they could go to another store to buy another unit.

But they were surprised and upset that the return policy said refunds would be in the same form as the original purchase except for cash, debit or check purchases over \$250. The Daughertys had to wait 14 business days to get a check back.

Bernard Daugherty said he would have accepted \$250 in cash first and waited the 14 business days for the remainder, but that wasn't an option.

Tony Mason, senior executive resolution specialist for Minneapolis-based Best

Please see **Action, D3**



BETTY LIN-FISHER



PAUL TOPLE/Akron Beacon Journal photos

**Q:** What's been the hardest part of being a one-person business?

**A:** "Marketing myself. I'm in a business where people don't exactly know what it is, so you have to force yourself to talk to people. I can buy all the ads in the world, but that's not going to tell half the people what it is I do. So I have to push myself out the door, and that takes time."

**PASS IT FORWARD**

**Q:** What's a creative way to market yourself?

**A:** Network and team up with other personal service providers because they're probably connected with the same demographic you're trying to reach. (At a recent open house she hosted, Mitchell allowed a massage therapist to come in and give five-minute chair massages to visitors.)

- Tamara Mitchell, Owner, Dine-In Diva, Akron



At right, Tamara Mitchell prepares heat-and-eat meals at a Plain Township couple's home. Above, the personal chef gives a squeeze of lemon.

# Whipping up a career

Personal chef rescues busy families, finds professional rewards

By Paula Schleis  
Beacon Journal business writer

Starting with a trip to the grocery store at 10 a.m., Tamara Mitchell's been working on dinner for about four hours now.

Her efforts are filling the Plain Township home with warm and inviting smells.

But Mitchell isn't the lucky homeowner about to dine on the veal and sage meatloaf with Gorgonzola gravy and mashed potatoes with prosciutto and

Parmesan. That's given away by her lime green chef's jacket and color-matching clogs, the uniform she assigned herself as "Dine-In Diva."

Last year, Mitchell chucked a career in health insurance to become a personal chef, a field that is growing along with the cries of time-pressed families.

There are now 9,000 personal chefs in the United States, according to an industry survey by the American Personal & Private Chef Association.

And yet . . .

"Most people don't understand what a personal chef is," said Mitchell, who usually has to explain her newly adopted profession.

It's pretty simple: People hire her to prepare a prescribed menu of meals in their home, for consuming now and later.



Mitchell plans and shops for the ingredients, cooks the meals (using her own kitchen equipment and the client's appliances), cleans up after herself, and leaves behind a fridge and freezer filled with entrees that cost, on average, what you might spend dining at Applebee's or Olive

Garden.

At the home of Debbie and David Kraft, Mitchell recently spent the day creating entrees selected by the couple. They included the veal meatloaf, as well as pumpkin chili

Please see **Chef, D3**

### ABOUT DINE-IN DIVA

- **Personal Chef:** Tamara Mitchell
- **Established:** 2005
- **Contact:** 330-571-8214 or dineindiva@personalchef.com
- **Service:** Mitchell plans and shops for the meals, cooks them in the client's home, packages them for the fridge or freezer and cleans up.
- **Sample cost:** A recent job provided 25 servings using four different recipes, for \$325 (including food.)
- **Services:** Gift certificates available. On-site catering for small parties and romantic dinners.

- PAULA SCHLEIS

### CORPORATE PROFILE

# Book centers on Owens Corning namesake

Glass-machinery inventor Michael J. Owens getting his share of posthumous publicity

By Homer Brickley  
Toledo Blade

For a man who's been dead 83 years, Michael J. Owens is getting a lot of attention lately.

The prolific glass-machinery inventor is the star of a new video and the subject of a new book. Last year, he was a comic-strip hero of sorts.

The latest tribute to Owens -

whose name is part of Owens-Illinois Inc., Owens Corning and Owens Community College - is a book by Quentin Skrabec Jr., a Maumee resident and adjunct professor of business at the University of Findlay.

His book, *Michael Owens and the Glass Industry*, published by Pelican Publishing Co. this month, tells how the "tough

Irishman" created such revolutionary machinery as the automatic bottle-blowing machine that became the foundation of O-I, which celebrated its centennial three years ago.

Skrabec, in management for steel companies for 22 years and the author of four other business and history books, said the book

is the first biography of Owens.

"It's almost sad," he said of the lack of published works on Owens.

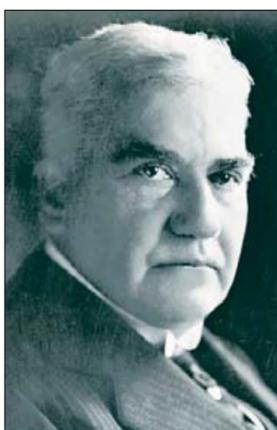
"If he had been in New York or (another) East Coast city, he would have gotten the publicity."

Owens also has a role in a short video - taken from a 1910 movie of an early bottle-making

machine in operation - that is part of the *Time in a Bottle* exhibit that runs through Dec. 29 at the University of Toledo's Ward M. Canaday Center for Special Collections.

Owens is shown examining two bottles made by the early machine, which could produce about 13,000 bottles daily. Modern versions of O-I's glassmaking machinery can

Please see **Owens, D2**



Michael J Owens

COMING MONDAY: A look at a nontraditional billiard hall