

Have a Fall Festival Right in Your Store

by Stephanie Bond

Show me a customer who's in a good mood, and I'll show you a customer with an open wallet. If you're looking for a clever but flexible way to merchandise new fall romance releases that will entertain your customers, think about using a 'country fall festival' motif:

- Hang streamers in red, yellow, and orange color schemes, or place silk fall foliage all around to create an atmosphere in your store.
- Hang signs and banners everywhere that say "Fall Into a Good Romance Novel." Or print up T-shirts for your employees.
- Check out a local craft store for scarecrows, mock bales of straw, or cornstalks to use as props around the store.
- Print a sheet of fall recipes to enjoy while reading such as 'One-Hand Caramel Popcorn.' (See page xx for recipe ideas.) Include a discount coupon for the purchase of a 'new release' romance novel.
- Change your welcome floor mat to one that has fall leaves printed on it.
- Buy fall-themed or checked tablecloths for your tables, counters, and window displays.
- Set up a small wagon (or wheelbarrow) full of straw to conjure up memories of a hayride—populate your wagon with gourds, pumpkins, and recommended romance novels.
- Set a basket of fresh apples in the romance section with a sign that reads "A Romance Novel a Day Keeps the Doctor Away."
- Serve spiced cider to your customers.
- Float rubber duckies in a punch bowl with discounts written on the bottom. Allow your customers to choose one at the checkout.
- Have your employees wear denim smocks with pockets to hold romance titles for hand-selling.

(continued)

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- Consider printing bookmarks with your store name and the words "This fall, fall in love with a romance novel."

- Have a drawing for a 'bushel of books.' Buy an inexpensive bushel basket at the hardware store, and fill it with romance books and other goodies. (Contact your local RWA chapter and ask published authors to donate autographed books.) Don't forget to make a big fuss over the winner—take pictures and post them at the counter.

- Autumn is a great time to start a romance newsletter—right before the holiday sales season. Use the drawing as a way to gather a romance reader mailing list.

When the leaves start to fall, thoughts turn to warm sweaters and cozy nights by the fire—reading. Start setting that mood as soon as the customer walks in your door. Remind her that curling up with a romance novel is like having a comforting slice of grandma's pumpkin pie.

Ahhhhhhhh. ~**S**Bond