CHAMPS SHOW MAGAZINE

ISSUE 87 - NOVEMBER 2026

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INSIDE:

Pg. 11: How Counter-Culture Can Actually Kill It on Black Friday

NEXT SHOW:

Ft. Lauderdale, Broward County Convention Center, November 17-19, 2026

COVER STORY:

Pg. 59: CHAMPS Fort Lauderale: Your Coastal Workation

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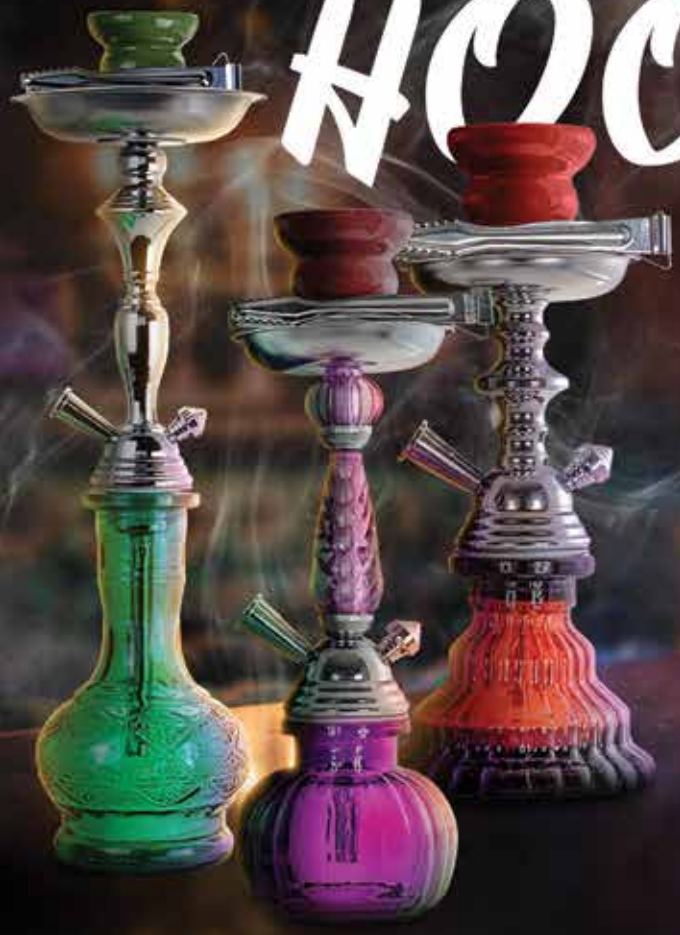
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HOW COUNTER-CULTURE SHOPS CAN ACTUALLY KILL IT ON BLACK FRIDAY

By Kevin Dankman

Every year around mid-November, smoke and vape shop owners catch the same panic bug. They look at Best Buy, Target, and a sea of grey-market wholesale websites, hit the big red button, and slash their entire inventory by 40%.

Here's the hard truth: Race-to-the-bottom discounting is a game you will lose every single time.

Slashing margins on pods, disposables, and everyday glass doesn't make you a retail mastermind. It just empties your shelves, exhausts your staff, and attracts bargain-hunting ghosts who'll never step foot inside your store again once prices bounce back.

Black Friday shouldn't be a panic fire sale. It's your chance to raid the holiday gift budgets of people who usually wouldn't touch a smoke shop, turn dead shelf space into clean cash, and build a roster of loyal neighborhood regulars who keep the lights on well into the new year.

Here is how you actually play the game—and win.

1. Ditch the Fire Sale, Build the "Out-of-the-Box" Rig

People buying gifts don't want a loose, discounted device and an awkward conversation at the register. They want an all-in-one answer.

Instead of dumping hardware at cost, bundle high-ticket anchors with the high-margin essentials that make them fun to open on holiday morning:

The Dry-Herb Enthusiast Kit: Take that sleek portable flower vape, package it with a custom four-piece grinder, smell-proof stash pouch, and premium organic papers. Slap a single package price on it that saves them $25 while preserving your 50% margin.

The "Stocking Stuffer" Grab-and-Go:
Build pre-packaged bundles right on the counter: a durable torch, premium refined butane, rolling tray, and odor-eliminating spray. Under $35, zero thinking required.

The "Bury the Dead Weight" Mystery Box:
Got hardware, tanks, or accessories that have been collecting dust on your bottom shelf for four months? Box them up in sealed $25, $50, and $75 mystery crates loaded with a mix of everyday rollers, stickers, snacks, and aged SKUs. Call it a collector's drop. Customers love the gamble, and your dead capital is instantly liquid.

Continues On Page 13

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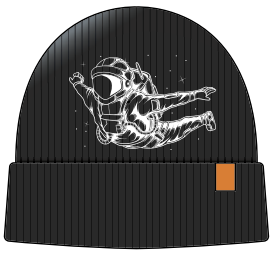
HOW COUNTER-CULTURE SHOPS CAN ACTUALLY KILL IT ON BLACK FRIDAY

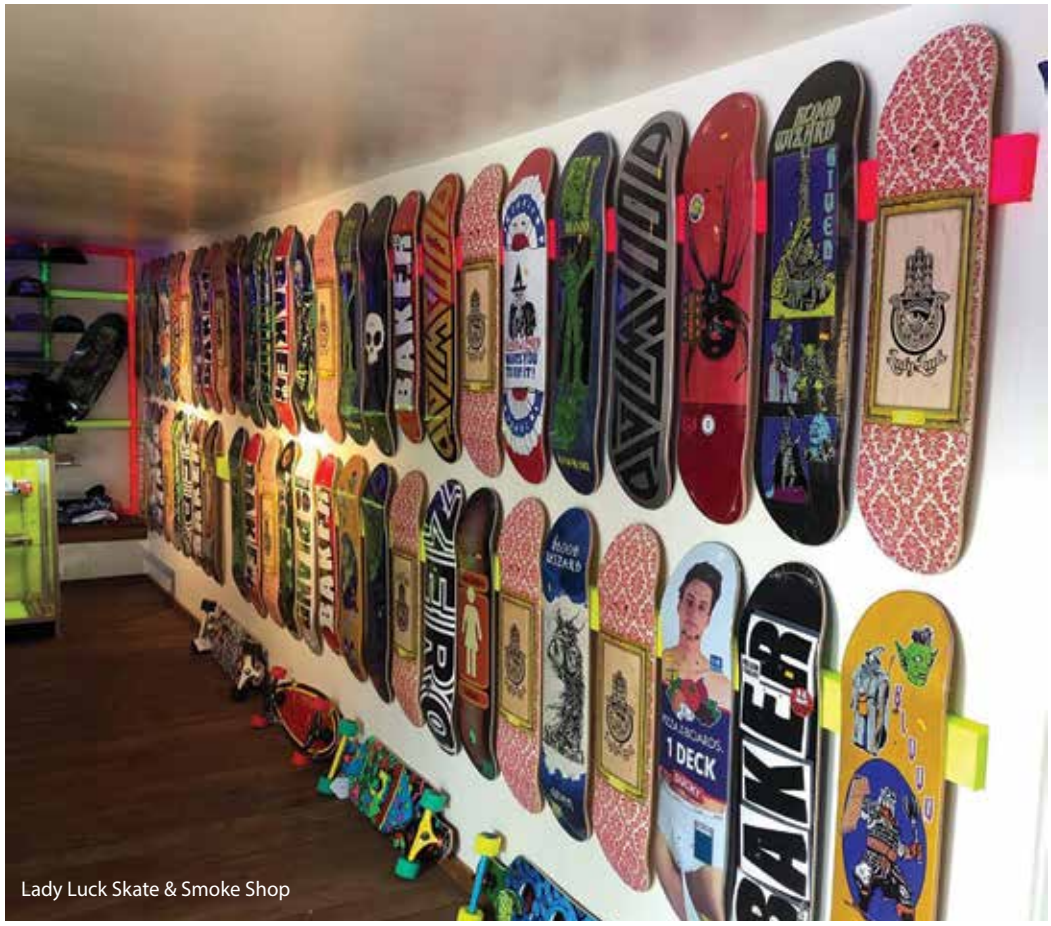
2. If You Only Sell Vapes and Glass, You're Leaving Money on the Pavement

If your shop looks identical to the three other vape joints within a two-mile radius, you're just a commodity stop. The smartest shops operating today understand they aren't just selling smoking gear — they're anchoring local subculture.

During the holidays, moms, girlfriends, and buddies walk through your doors looking for gifts for the connoisseur in their life. Give them something they can actually wrap:

Streetwear & Independent Apparel: Graphic tees, heavy fleece hoodies, beanies, and local brand collabs carry monster margins (often 60%+) and don't require an ID check to buy as a gift.





Lady Luck Skate & Smoke Shop

Skate Decks on the Walls: Hang limited shop decks, local artist collabs, or collector series decks right above your glass cases. It breaks up the sterile corporate smoke shop vibe, turns dead wall space into high-margin art, and pulls in the street crowd.

Mycology & Functional Herbs: Lions Mane, Cordyceps, functional adaptogen tonics, and artisan teas. This bridges the gap for daytime wellness foot traffic who might not vape or smoke, but walk in looking for cutting-edge botanical alternatives.

Continues On Page 20


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HOW COUNTER-CULTURE SHOPS CAN ACTUALLY

3. Outsmart Big Tech's Censorship Wall

Meta and Google hate your industry. Trying to boost an Instagram post or run a paid Facebook ad for a counter-culture shop will get your ad account locked faster than a bad coil burns dry cotton. Stop wasting your energy trying to trick the algorithm. Own your audience:

The VIP Text Drop:

Your SMS list is your printing press. Don't blast them on Friday morning with the rest of the noise. Run an exclusive "Members-Only Early Drop" the Monday or Tuesday before Thanksgiving. Give them first dibs on limited glass and mystery bundles. They feel like VIPs, and you spread the floor madness over a full week.

Old-School Bag Stuffers (Start in October):

Hand every paying customer a sealed "Golden Envelope" throughout October and November. The rule? They can only bring it back to be opened at the counter between Black Friday and Cyber Monday to reveal their mystery discount or freebie.



KILL IT ON BLACK FRIDAY



Cross-Pollinate the Block:
Team up with the local independent skate shop, the craft brewery down the road, and the neighborhood tattoo studio. Do a local punch-card or receipt swap: "Show your receipt from their register, get 15% off accessories at ours." Build an indie coalition that beats Amazon together.

4. Turn the One-Timer into a January Regular
The absolute biggest failure of Black Friday is letting 500 customers walk out the door and never seeing them again.

The January "Bounce-Back":
January is notoriously cold for retail. Combat it by stapling a "January Only" voucher to every Black Friday receipt: $10 off your first restock of coils, liquids, or accessories in January. It forces them back through your doors when everyone else is ghosting.

Train Your Crew on Attachments, Not Cash Totals:
Don't tell your counter staff to push high dollar totals. Train them on the attach rate. Someone buying a water pipe? Hand them the all-natural glass cleaner and a fresh pack of screens before ringing them up. Someone grabbing a pod device? Drop the backup pack of coils right next to it. That's where pure net profit lives.

Continues On Page 38

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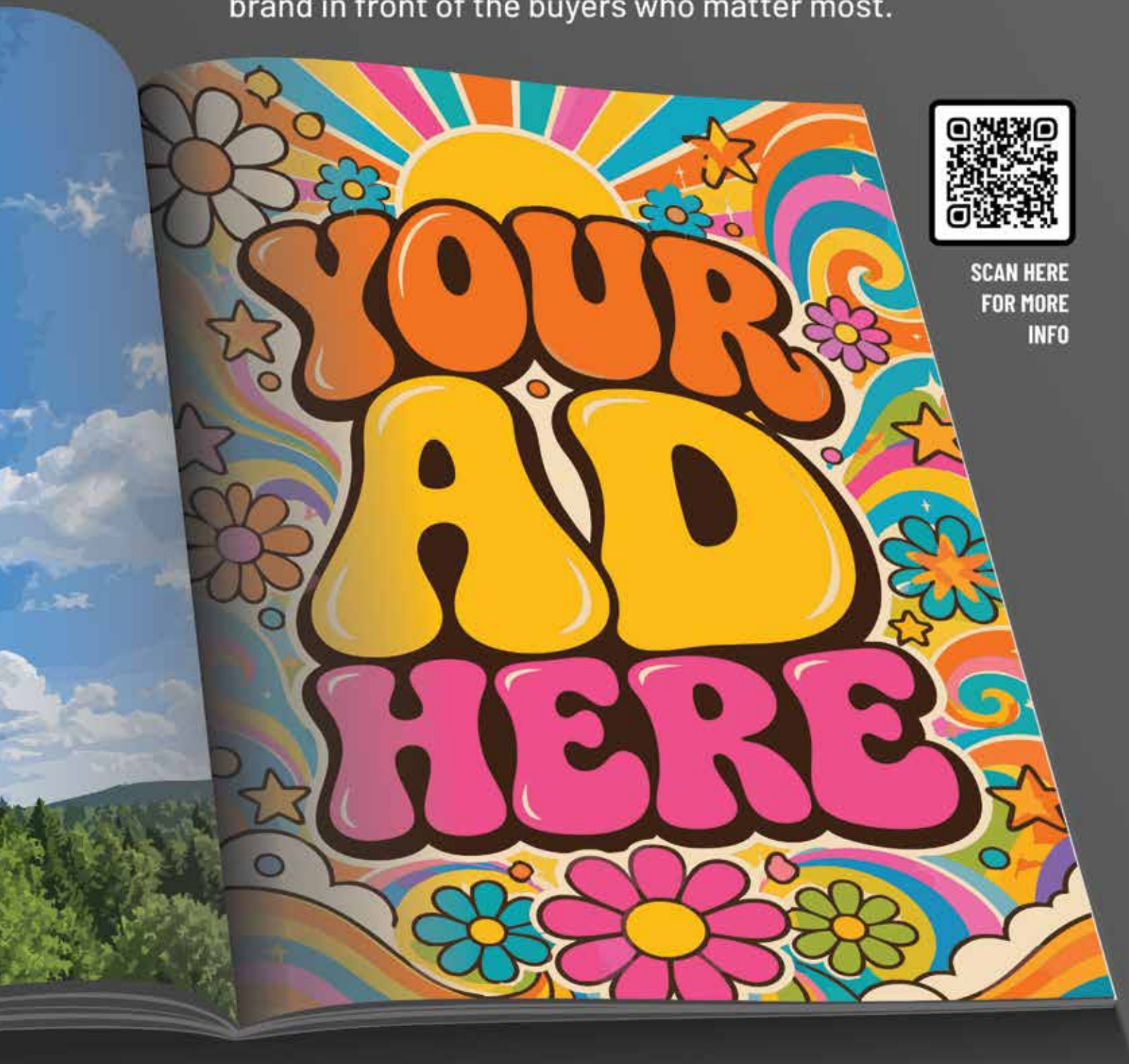
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Code Red's Vape+Aid Cleans House with Black Ice, Lemon Aid, and Fresh Mint

By Kevin Dankman

Category: Functional Botanicals / Nicotine-Free Alternatives

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If you run a shop, you already know the story behind the counter. Plenty of customers love the simple ritual of vaping, but a lot of them are getting tired of constant nicotine cravings and mystery ingredients. When folks want to dial it back, they don't want a lecture—they just want something that feels right, delivers a satisfying hit, and tastes genuinely clean.

I've vaped off and on for years, so I can spot weak flavor and cheap hardware pretty quickly. That's why Vape+Aid by Code Red caught me off guard in a good way. I tested three of their main respiratory blends—Black Ice Detox+, Original Detox (Fresh Mint), and Lemon Aid—and they completely earned my respect.

The Draw & Throat Feel

First off, the airflow feels spot on. You don't have to pull endlessly to get a solid vapor output, yet it's snug enough to give you a natural mouth-to-lung feel. It scratch that hand-to-mouth itch without feeling airy or loose.

The coil handles these botanical extracts smoothly without any harsh or burnt aftertaste. On top of that, the subtle glow-in-the-dark accent ring is a handy little touch that stands out on display and makes the device easy to find on your desk at night.

Flavor Breakdown: Real Flavor, No Gimmicks

Black Ice Detox+: This one hits the hardest. Blending an intense arctic menthol punch with mullein leaf extract, it gives you a surprisingly bold, icy throat hit. If a customer is transitioning away from strong salt-nic formulas and worries about missing that chest feel, this is the one to recommend. It opens up your sinuses with a crisp, freezing finish.



Original Detox – Fresh Mint: Crisp and straight to the point. Rather than tasting like sugary gum, it tastes like real garden-fresh peppermint. It leaves your mouth feeling clean without leaving a cloying sweetener film behind. It's an easy, refreshingly simple all-day option.

Lemon Aid Detox: Bright and tangy without tasting like household cleaner. Packed with citrus extracts and Vitamin C, it starts with a lively citrus zing and settles into a smooth herbal finish. It makes for a light, invigorating daytime vape.

The Bottom Line for Retailers

At a fair $14.99 MSRP for around 600 to 1,000 puffs, carrying all three flavors gives shops a great ready-to-go "Reset" option near the register.

You get zero regulatory or excise tax headaches, plus a legit alternative for customers looking to ease off nicotine while keeping the habit. If you need a clean, non-nicotine line that actually delivers on flavor and performance, Code Red's Vape+Aid deserves a spot on your counter.

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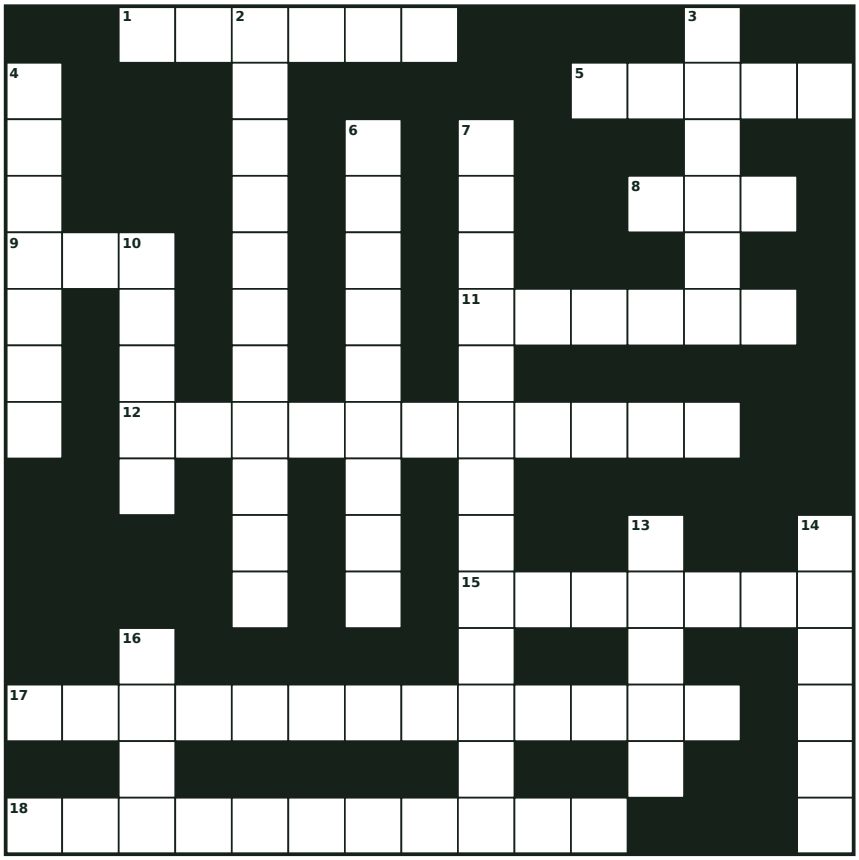


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5. Identifiable product name and identity
8. Stock-keeping unit, for short
9. Point-of-sale system, for short
11. Trade show connecting buyers and vendors
12. Number of shoppers entering a store
15. Unplanned purchase near the register, perhaps
17. Average dollar value of a customer's transaction
18. Percentage of revenue remaining after cost of goods sold

DOWN

2. Percentage of received inventory sold during a set period
3. Amount added to product cost to establish its selling price
4. Visual product presentation on the sales floor
6. Merchandise currently held for sale
7. Practice of presenting products to encourage sales
10. Store team
13. Retail professional sourcing products at CHAMPS
14. Sale of goods directly to consumers
16. Live product presentation

ANSWER KEY ON PAGE 70


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HOW COUNTER-CULTURE SHOPS CAN ACTUALLY KILL IT ON BLACK FRIDAY

The Pre-Game Checklist

[ ] **Audit the Shelf Warmers:** Pull every hardware SKU sitting over 90 days. Box them, tag them, and price them as mystery holiday bundles.

[ ] **Deck the Walls:** Fill empty wall real estate with apparel, graphics, and boards to make the floor look like a lifestyle destination, not a pharmacy counter.

[ ] **Warm Up the SMS Lines:** Cue up your subscriber-exclusive teasers for the week before Thanksgiving.

[ ] **Print the January Bounce-Backs:** Have a stack of physical cards sitting by every POS terminal before you unlock the doors on Friday morning.

Own the Season

At the end of the day, independent counter-culture retail has something no algorithm, mega-warehouse, or big-box chain can ever replicate: genuine culture, authentic community, and a pulse.

The customers walking through your doors this season aren't just looking for a discount code — they're looking for curated taste, real product knowledge, and a local clubhouse vibe they can actually trust. While the corporate giants are busy beating each other over the head in a race to the bottom, you have the agility to pivot, surprise your neighborhood, and build an experience people genuinely look forward to visiting.

Take a breath, lock in your bundles, fire up your crew, and step out onto the floor with confidence. The foot traffic is out there, the holiday gift budgets are wide open, and the stage is set for one of the most profitable Q4 runs your shop has ever seen.

Now get those displays dialed, open the doors, and go crush it.

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THE GOLDEN CORRIDOR: WHY DECEMBER 26-31 IS A SMOKE SHOP'S REAL CASH COW

By Editorial Staff

While the big-box retailers spend the day after Christmas nursing retail hangovers and wading through mountains of returned wool sweaters, smoke shops are sitting on a retail goldmine.

In our world, the real action kicks off the second Christmas wraps up. From December 26 right through the final countdown on New Year's Eve, we hit what I like to call the Golden Corridor — a high-energy, six-day sprint that can easily deliver some of the biggest profit margins of the entire year.

Here's why it happens, what's flying off the shelves, and how to prep your floor so you don't leave easy money on the table.

Continues On Page 48



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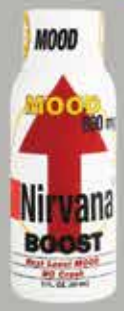
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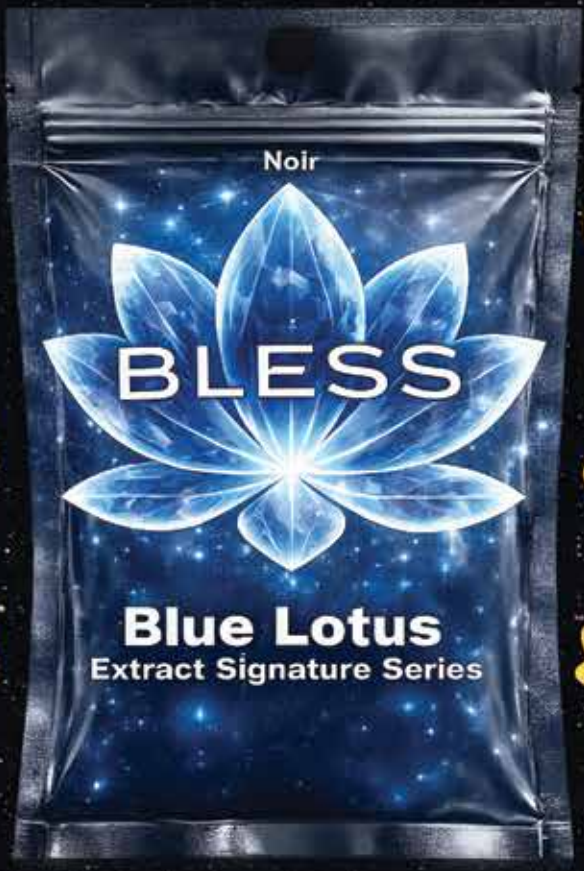
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THE GOLDEN CORRIDOR: WHY DECEMBER 26-31 IS A SMOKE SHOP'S REAL CASH COW

The Secret Weapon: The College Break Cash-Drop
Before Christmas, your shop is full of nervous, clueless shoppers. It's moms staring blankly at terp pens, older siblings trying to guess what kind of grinder their brother wants, and partners buying modest little stocking stuffers.

The day after Christmas? The script completely flips. College kids are back home on winter break, reconnecting with their hometown crews and hitting the town. More importantly, their pockets are lined with unmonitored cash from grandma's holiday cards, year-end bonuses, and the sweet, sweet proceeds from returning terrible department-store gifts. They aren't shopping for others anymore—they're shopping for themselves, and they want upgrades before the New Year's Eve parties kick off.

Continues On Page 52

Pre-Holiday Shopper (Dec 1–24)	Post-Holiday Shopper (Dec 26-31)
Buying gifts for friends/family	Buying upgrades for themselves
Hesitant, budget-conscious, playing it safe	Flush with fresh cash, ready to splurge
Looking for 15-30 stocking stuffers	Hunting 100-300 centerpieces & e-rigs
Solo shoppers running quick errands	Rolling in packs of 3 to 5 friends

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THE GOLDEN CORRIDOR: WHY DECEMBER 26-31 IS A SMOKE SHOP'S REAL CASH COW

The Floor Prep Checklist: Get Staged by Dec 24

If you're scrambling to stock cases on the 26th, you're already behind. Have this staged and locked in before you lock up Christmas Eve:

Party Consumables (Stack 'Em High):

Bulk cones (raw 6-packs to 50-packs), natural wraps, leaf wraps, and rows of rolling papers. People are stocking up for house parties—they don't want to run out at 11:30 PM on the 31st.

The "Upgrade" Hardware:

Pull your marquee pieces out front. Premium 14" to 18" beakers, Puffco peaks, Carta rigs, and high-end handheld vaporizers. Put them right at eye level.

The Rig Refreshers:

Quartz bangers (10mm & 14mm), carb caps, terp pearls, fresh bowls, and downstems. A lot of kids don't need a whole new tube, but they'll happily drop $60 on fresh quartz and a custom slide.



Fuel & Torch Wall:

High-end torches (75) along with plenty of 5x/11x refined butane cans. If you sell a rig, butane is an automatic add-on.

Impulse Goldmines at Checkout:

Clipper trays, lighter leashes, Formula 420, isopropyl wipes, and odor-eliminating sprays lined up right next to the card reader.

Staffing the Chaos: No Ghost Crews Allowed

The biggest mistake an operator can make is running a skeleton crew after Christmas. You need energy, fast checkouts, and solid eyes on the floor.

Continues On Page 56

CHAMPS TRADE SHOWS

CHAMPS TRADE SHOWS

THE PREMIER COUNTERCULTURE B2B EXPO SINCE 1999

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THE GOLDEN CORRIDOR: WHY DECEMBER 26-31 IS A SMOKE SHOP'S REAL CASH COW

Expect two big waves each day:
The afternoon errand rush (1:00 PM – 4:00 PM) and the pre-party evening crew (6:30 PM – close).

Dec 26 (The Cash Influx):
Run 3 to 4 staff. You'll have a wave of folks breaking $50s and $100s, eager to spend their loot.

Dec 27–28 (The Mid-Week Drift):
2 to 3 staff. Keep the floor clean, rotate display glass, and push high-margin bundles.

Dec 29–30 (The Ramp-Up):
3 to 4 staff. Friends are hanging out in groups. You need one person dedicated to opening glass cases and talking specs, while another handles rapid ring-outs.

Dec 31 (New Year's Eve Madness):
All hands on deck (4+ staff). Dedicate someone strictly to door ID checks so the register line never stalls, keep the cash register moving, and keep the glass specialist floating.



Two Quick Pro-Tips for the Register:
Load Up the Safe With Small Bills: Customers will walk in with fresh, crisp $100 bills grandma gave them to buy a $12 pack of wraps. Have enough $5s, $10s, and $20s in your float so you don't run dry by 2 PM.

Brush Up on Out-of-State IDs:
Since college students are visiting from all over the country, remind your staff what valid out-of-state IDs look like so the door stays totally compliant without awkward delays.

The final week of December separates the shops that just drift into January from the ones that know how to run a real retail hustle. When you treat that post-Christmas stretch like the main event—catering to college crews with cash burning a hole in their pockets—you can clean out your backstock, stack fat margins, and ring in the new year with a packed register.

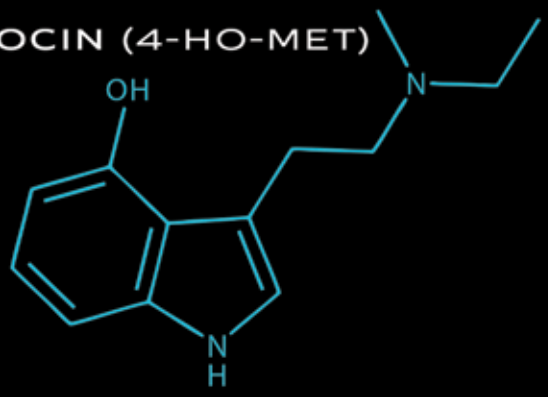
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CHAMPS FORT LAUDERDALE:

By Mick Burnwell

Trade show season hits different when your commute involves palm trees, ocean breezes, and dockside views. CHAMPS is heading back to South Florida this November, setting up at the Broward County Convention Center for three focused days of high-volume buying, exclusive networking, and industry culture.

This is the final CHAMPS Trade Show of the year—making it your absolute last chance to lock in exclusive end-of-year pricing and stock your store shelves before the peak holiday rush. Whether you need bulk inventory for Black Friday or are scouting next season's breakout product lines, Fort Lauderdale is the deadline to secure manufacturer terms before the calendar turns.





YOUR COASTAL WORKATION





Set Your Schedule:
New Official Show Hours!
Plan your floor time carefully to take full advantage of this year's distinct daily schedule:

Day 1:
1:00 PM – 7:00 PM
(Late start, evening buying!)

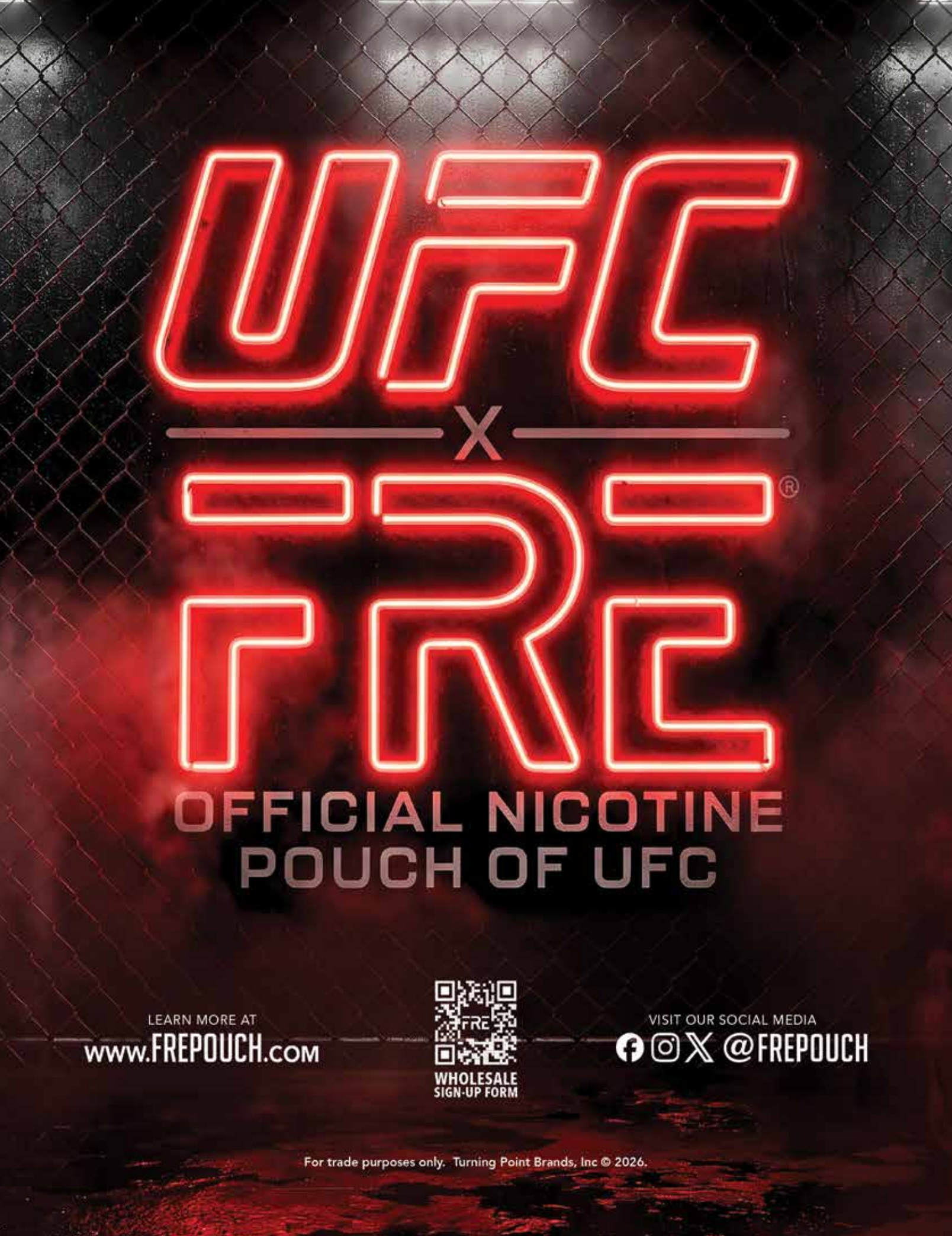
Day 2:
11:00 AM – 6:00 PM
(Full day of non-stop action)

Day 3:
11:00 AM – 4:20 PM
(Wrap up your holiday orders before the closing bell!)

Floor access is open to qualified retail store owners, managers, buyers, and wholesale distributors connecting directly with top-tier brands and manufacturers.



Continues On Page 69


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CHAMPS FORT LAUDERDALE: YOUR COASTAL WORKATION

Official Host Hotel: Hilton Fort Lauderdale Marina

For the ultimate convenience, the Hilton Fort Lauderdale Marina serves as the official host hotel for CHAMPS Fort Lauderdale. Situated along the scenic Intracoastal Waterway just minutes from the Broward County Convention Center, it places attendees right next to waterfront dining, dockside views, and a quick walk to the show floor each morning.

Location:
1881 SE 17th St,
Fort Lauderdale, FL

Atmosphere: Resort pool deck, waterfront dining, and instant access to the convention district.

What to Expect on the Floor

Holiday Order Writing: Meet face-to-face with established market staples and rising indie brands offering show-only terms, holiday volume discounts, and end-of-year closeouts.

Top-Tier Networking & Industry Culture: Connect directly with master distributors, brand founders, and fellow store owners from across the country.

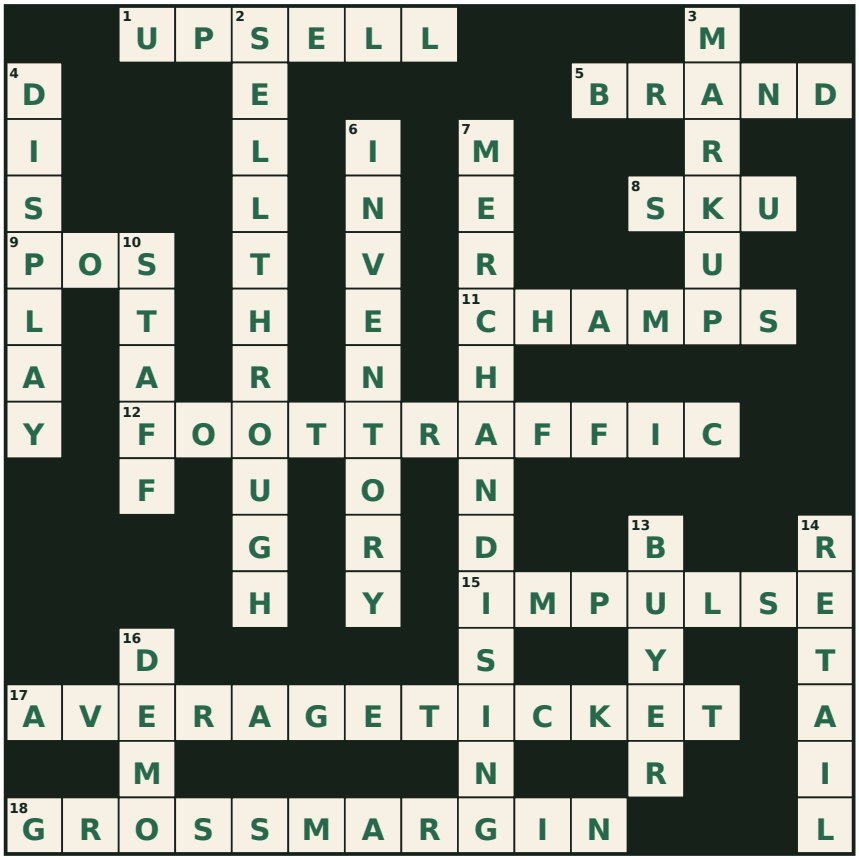
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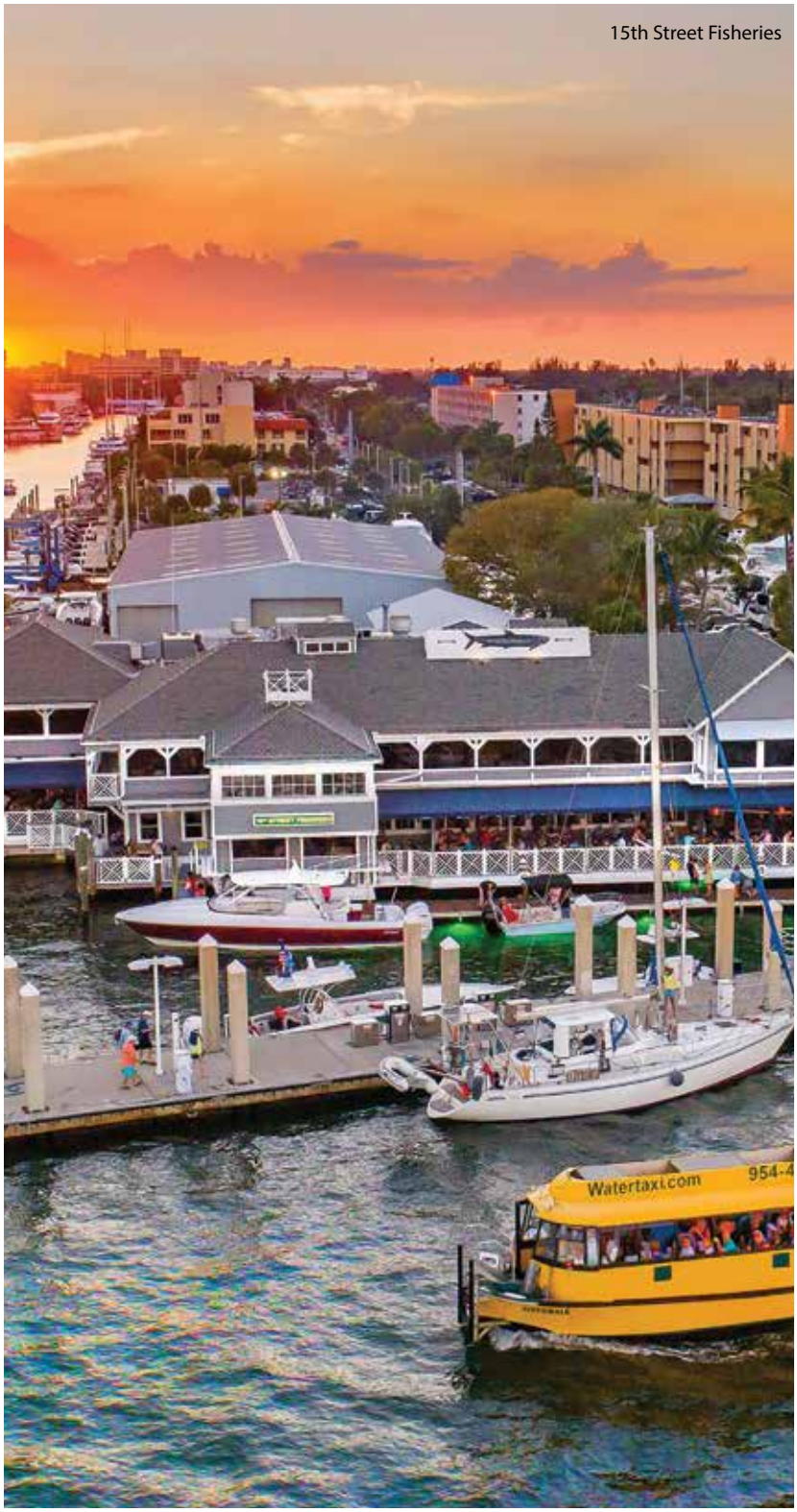
ACROSS ANSWERS

1. Encourage a shopper to choose a higher-value option [UPSELL]
5. Identifiable product name and identity [BRAND]
8. Stock-keeping unit, for short [SKU]
9. Point-of-sale system, for short [POS]
11. Trade show connecting buyers and vendors [CHAMPS]
12. Number of shoppers entering a store [FOOTTRAFFIC]
15. Unplanned purchase near the register, perhaps [IMPULSE]
17. Average dollar value of a customer's transaction [AVERAGETICKET]
18. Percentage of revenue remaining after cost of goods sold [GROSSMARGIN]

DOWN ANSWERS

2. Percentage of received inventory sold during a set period [SELLTHROUGH]
3. Amount added to product cost to establish its selling price [MARKUP]
4. Visual product presentation on the sales floor [DISPLAY]
6. Merchandise currently held for sale [INVENTORY]
7. Practice of presenting products to encourage sales [MERCHANDISING]
10. Store team [STAFF]
13. Retail professional sourcing products at CHAMPS [BUYER]
14. Sale of goods directly to consumers [RETAIL]
16. Live product presentation [DEMO]

CHAMPS FORT LAUDERDALE: YOUR COASTAL WORKATION



15th Street Fisheries

Interactive Buyer Activations: Experience the hands-on fun of the Glass Games arcade showcase and test your skills for prizes before wrapping up your floor rounds.

After the Floor Closes: Where to Unwind
When the badge comes off, take advantage of the local scene with these top spots situated just minutes away from the venue:

15th Street Fisheries (Dinner on the Water): A classic waterfront dining staple tucked inside the Lauderdale Marina, ideal for a sit-down business dinner or celebratory post-show meal. Enjoy fresh catches, raw bar staples, and open-air views where you can feed the giant tarpon right off the dock.

Southport Raw Bar (Waterfront Dive): The quintessential canal-side dive bar and local hangout, running strong since the 1970s. Pull up a stool along the canal for cold draft pitchers, peel-and-eat shrimp, and an unpretentious, laid-back vibe built for unwinding with your crew after long booth hours.

Bonnet House Museum & Gardens (Cultural Escape): A preserved 35-acre historic subtropical estate nestled between the beach and the Intracoastal. Packed with art studios, coastal hammock ecosystems, and historic charm, it makes an ideal morning cultural visit before Day 1's 1:00 PM late floor opening.

Pack your order pads, adjust your clocks for the new daily schedule, and don't miss the final wholesale opportunities of the year under the Florida sun.


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