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Thank Your Lucky Stars

The rules on thank-you note etiquette

Lauren Geldzahler

Special to the Jewish Times

The fact that it's 2010 and we're hurtling into the future won't excuse you from writing thank you notes. Teyve from Fiddler on the Roof said it best — "Tradition!" Two local stationery professionals talked to us about proper thank you card etiquette.

When asked about the appropriate timeline for writing a thank you note, Ruth Green, owner of Jamar Personalized Services said, "I would say within a month of receiving the gift, but I tell people it's never too late to do the right thing. So if you are sidetracked by life pressures, then it's better to write one than to never write one."

Ruth Block, owner of CC Design and Print, took a different stance. "It's comfortable to say three months. I think the sooner the better because you are filled with more excitement about the wedding and about the gift and I think your sincerity will really show."

Both Ruth Block and Ruth Green stressed the importance of using a sincere tone when writing thank you notes.

"I think that even though you're writing a lot of notes, you must recognize that each person used their time, resources to pick out something extra special for you. I think that gift givers deserve a warm note that should sound like they're the only one getting a thank you," said Ruth Block.

"Writing is a higher form of how you speak. ...Use words like 'genuinely', 'thoughtful' and 'really appreciate.' It doesn't have to be overdone, but if you have one or two

words that show sincerity, you will get compliments that you write the nicest thank you notes," said Ruth Green.

Both ladies also mentioned to "personalize it."

"If your guests were part of something memorable about the wedding, if they helped hold the chairs up during the hora, then mention that," said Ruth Block.

"The tone also depends on who you're writing to," said Ruth Green. "Say it's a grandparent and you're thanking them for your *bat mitzvah* gift, say it was a piece of jewelry — tell your nana how much you love it and will always think of her when you wear it."

"Would you call your friends 'Sid and Susan' or 'Mr. And Mrs. Kaplan'? Even your greeting, how you refer to people, sets the tone," continued Ms. Green.

"I like to start a thank you note with the word 'what' or 'how,'" said Ms. Block. "For example, 'What a wonderful surprise I had when we opened the door and saw your flowers,' or 'How did you know my favorite store?'"

Both Ms. Green and Ms. Block stress the importance of specifically mentioning the gift and how it will be used.

"If it was something for your house, mention how you've displayed it. I think the typical note starts with something like, 'Thank you very much for the gift you sent in honor of our wedding...the beautiful serving piece sits on our dining room table,'" said Ruth Block.

"If it's a cash gift, you would suggest maybe you're going to put it away for your future as a married

couple. If you're a bar or bat mitzvah maybe you're going to say you're going to put it away for college," said Ruth Green.

Now you've just got to get yourself to write them.

"Take your guest list and decide how to break it up to get them out by a certain date," said Ms. Green. "Write a few each week or few each night. Set aside Wednesday nights. Another way to keep on task is to write different frames of ways you can write them and then personalize each."

Keep in mind that people want to know that you received their gift.

"Not that you should do something because you don't want to be embarrassed, but you don't want to put yourself in the situation where someone asks you, 'Did you get the gift?'" cautioned Ms. Green.

"Not that you should do it for the compliments. You do it to be appreciative. You do it for closure. It makes you feel accomplished," said Ruth Green. "But you'll be surprised that every now and then people will mention how it made them feel to read such a nice thank you note. That's what close relationships are built on," said Ms. Green.

Nowadays people are trying to save money and cut corners, but thank you notes are a time-honored tradition giving a priceless impression. *Mazel tov!* Now get writing!

Some More Do's and Don'ts:
 "What should not be mentioned is the amount of the gift if somebody gives a check, but it should be referred to as a generous gift." - Ruth Block

"Brides are writing thank you notes for their engagement gifts, their shower gifts and wedding gifts. It's appropriate to thank for each thing, because generally there are months between. But they can all be written on the same stationery." - Ruth Green

"My personal feeling with group gifts is that every household should get a note. Even if it was only one person that buys the gift, everybody chipped in." - Ruth Block

"Don't e-mail your thank you notes — the language is abbreviated and cutesy, and it's really not who you are. With traditional thank you notes, you take your time, just as the person who gave the gift took time to think about you." - Ruth Green

"It's also nice to write a little note thanking the vendors you used that were extra special." - Ruth Block

"Don't be afraid to use leftover thank you notes as stationery, as birthday cards or to thank friends for inviting you to their home for dinner. Getting custom personalized notes with your name on it is only pennies compared to buying individual greeting cards." - Ruth Green □

Lauren Geldzahler is a member of the Baltimore Jewish Times art department.

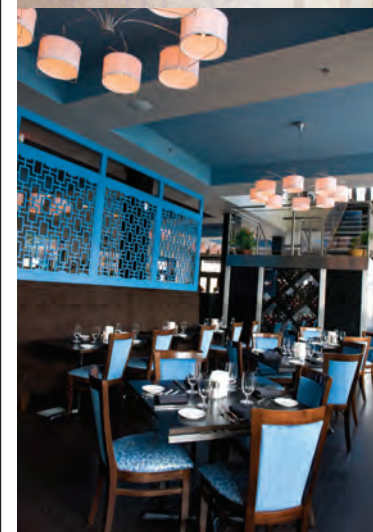


Ruth Block,
 owner of CC
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