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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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SUNDAYS AT THE SHOP

> My business had a strong Mother's Day this year. Sales were up by about 5 percent. That increase puts us in line with a lot of other florists: A Society of American Florists member survey after the holiday found that about 60 percent of us saw a sales increase. That's great news in this retail environment: Customers have plenty of gift options, and Mother's Day is an important holiday for our industry.

It's also a holiday that consumer trends may be reshaping. In 28 years as a florist, I've seen that firsthand.

First of all, consumers are ordering later and later. For the past few Mother's Days — and to a certain extent, Valentine's Day, too — we'll start out the week at my business feeling a little nervous: Business is slow. Did we order too much? Did we over-prepare? By the end of the week, we're often hustling to order more flowers. This year, Friday was our busiest sales day by far, generating about 35 percent of our total orders.

On top of that, consumers' expectations are sky high. People are accustomed to services such as Amazon Prime and Amazon Now — especially here in Seattle, where Amazon is our neighbor. People expect that they can buy items and, within a few hours, have those goods on their doorstep, no questions asked.

That's why I'm surprised to hear some florists say they don't open their doors on Sunday for Mother's Day (and for Valentine's Day, when that holiday falls on a Sunday).

I understand their reasoning: They want to give their staff a break, and to provide mothers on staff some time to enjoy the holiday. Sunday isn't a big sales day. Listening to other members of SAF's Retailers Council, I know that in parts of the country, including the Deep South, customers don't expect a business to be open on Sunday, and maybe in those regions, it doesn't make sense to be open.

Here in Washington, though, it doesn't make sense to be closed. In fact, I can't imagine telling customers we're closed on Mother's Day. Frankly, I think they'd be insulted. ("You want my business, but aren't even open on this major floral holiday?")

We started opening on Sundays for Mother's Day about 15 years ago. At the time, we added a slight surcharge for Sunday deliveries, but even that practice has become outdated now. Our customers simply expect those Sunday hours and services — every other business in our area offers them or something comparable.

Sunday isn't our biggest sales day. Less than 5 percent of sales come in that day. On the other hand, it has become a day that helps us better manage our workflow — and plan for all those procrastinating customers who wait until Friday or Saturday, despite our best efforts to get orders in early.

The first few years that we were open on Sunday for Mother's Day, we made about 50 deliveries on the day. This year, we did 350 deliveries on Sunday, compared to 300-plus on Friday and more than 400 on Saturday. If we hadn't been opened on Sunday this year, we would have had to spread those 350 orders over our already packed Friday and Saturday — or, even worse, we might have turned customers away, and pushed them straight into our competitors' arms.

Instead, everyone on my team, 10 delivery drivers and 11 designers and sales team members, worked at least a little on Sunday. Were we tired? Yes! Were we also using the day to restock the cooler for Monday? Absolutely. But by being in-store and serving customers on that day, we were also telling our customers something: We're here and we're ready to help you with anything you need. In today's market, that's an important and lasting message to send. 🌸



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