

GARAGE SALES

Coca-Cola Collectibles

Coca-Cola began at an Atlanta soda fountain in 1886 and, since then, the company has churned out a huge amount of advertising, collectibles and other memorabilia. For instance, the now familiar hourglass Coca-Cola bottle first appeared in 1915 and the company has a rich, 125-year history of advertising.

The Coca-Cola Co. says the Coca-Cola Collectors Club was established in 1974 to promote the preservation and collection of memorabilia related to the company. It has more than 40 chapters across the world.

Phil Mooney, the vice president of heritage communications and chief archivist at Coca-Cola, says that, if you want to start your own collection of Coke memorabilia, you need to start with a thorough education.

“Talk to people who have been collecting a while,” he says, and get what he calls the



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Coke Collector Bible, Allan Petretti’s “Coca-Cola Collectibles Price Guide” in the latest edition. He also recommends attending the convention in Atlanta where collectors swap, sell and auction their goods.

Because there’s such a wide

variety of items available, Mooney also says to decide on one specific area that interests you the most.

“You can’t collect everything,” he says, “but with so many shapes, sizes and colors, you can become an expert in a given category.”

He recommends starting with small items, such as pins and change trays. Bottles are also popular, and can be narrowed down into aluminum or glass bottles, then to commemorative, antique, contour and straight-sided. You can even choose Olympic bottles,

sporting events, and presidential or political bottles.

You’ll also need to set a budget, both for spending money and for space. Vending machines, for instance, take up a lot of room. You’ll need more than the shelf or two you’d need for pins or even bottles. If you’re collecting for value, Mooney recommends antique bottles made between 1900 and 1920. They go for around \$300 each.

Trademark contour bottles are also popular and easy to get. They’re made in various cities and states, Mooney says, so there are many to choose from. Older bottles have raised, embossed lettering and new ones have white writing and patent dates.

No matter what you choose to collect in the Coca-Cola universe, Mooney recommends buying items in the best condition you can find. This will let them keep their value better.

And don’t get in over your head. Mooney says to start out by going to auctions without buying anything, just to see how it works. Figure out the strategies people use in bidding and also work out some conventions and collectors’ meetings you can attend. Barring that, do your research on other online auction sites, such as eBay, and get familiar with the merchandise before making your first bid.

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SELLER’S TIP

Allan Petretti’s ‘Coca-Cola Collectibles Price Guide’

Even if you’re divesting collectibles not investing in them, Mooney still has some great tips to follow. If you want to ask a fair price for what you have, Petretti’s book is a great place to start; so is searching auction sites to get a good idea of what similar items are selling for.

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