

I was browsing through the vast number of pots, pans, crockery, cutlery and what have you in the home ware section of the shop when I spotted some mugs. Having already been given a set by a relative, I thought it would be nice to add to the collection. I waited for the lady to finish serving the customer in front of me and then asked for a set of six. The other shop assistant said he would get a box from the stockroom. To save him going back twice I asked if he could also bring me the matching sandwich platter as I had one at home and thought it would be nice to have a pair.

Off he went into the bowels of the store to retrieve my items and I waited around looking at the other products on display. After what seemed like an exceedingly long time he came bearing a box of mugs and a platter. However, it was not the one I had asked for. I explained to them that this was not the platter I had at home and described it as "a rectangular dish with a border matching the mugs". The lady explained to me that the platter the gentleman had brought up was the only 'sandwich platter' they had. I told her that my aunt had given me the set of mugs with the sandwich dish a few years ago and I still had it at home. She then proceeded to tell me that having worked on the shop floor for seventeen years; she had never come across the plate I was talking about.

Maybe it was an oval platter I was looking for or could it be a different brand, or what about the possibility that my aunt had bought it from an outlet she suggested. By this time my hackles had definitely risen and it was with great effort that I bit my tongue. No, it was not an oval platter (at this age I think I can identify shapes), no not a different brand (yes I can actually read what it says on the back of the plate), and no my aunt did not get it in an outlet shop (had I known there was one I might have headed there in the first place and avoided this conversation!).

It got to the stage where I had to inform her once again that I had one such platter sitting in a drawer in my kitchen and the best thing might be if I actually brought it over to show her. She then backed down a bit and suggested that I email a photo to her. "Good idea," I replied.

It was quite unfathomable to me why the shop assistant was so adamant that I was wrong. Why on earth would I or anyone for that matter fabricate the existence of such a thing? Maybe there were groups of shoppers who go around asking for products that have never been manufactured and don't actually exist!

For every bad experience there are numerous good ones and maybe incidents like this make us more appreciative of good service when we experience it. In other words, good service is good business. ■