

SHOP
LOCAL
for the
Holidays



Strengthen Your Community

When you focus on shopping locally this holiday season, you help foster a deeper sense of community.

This simple act contributes to the betterment and well-being of your town, as you support your neighbors and the local economy.

Local vendors and service providers are an integral part of every business ecosystem. You can contribute to them finishing the sales year on a high note. This, in turn, provides jobs and financial support through wages and taxes, of course, but they're also part of your town's story. These homegrown shops are part of a larger narrative of growth and innovation. Together, they create a sense of place.

SPREADING THE WORD

Help spread the word by becoming a local storyteller. Sharing your experiences about shopping local can help grow the small businesses you patronize while empowering others to become more conscientious and better informed. Don't hesitate to tell others about special finds, personalized service and the kind of deep community involvement that helps make



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your hometown unique.

One study found that these stories are particularly effective in attracting new customers to businesses owned by members of under-represented communities. Everyone is more apt to shop with businesses that have an intriguing vision or shared mission, in particular during the holidays.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Have you had a unique experience at a store? Did you connect with an owner or manager who went above and beyond to cater to your needs? Share it with others. Tell friends, write a letter to local media, post about it on social media, call into a radio show or email the business directly to provide a

testimonial in your own words. Don't forget the old saying about a picture conveying a thousand words: Capture and share festive images from your holiday shopping.

These recommendations are more effective if you leave genuine consumer reviews that go beyond a simple thumbs-up. Keep in mind,

too, that every experience won't be positive. If you have a negative experience, discuss it with the owner or sales representative in a detailed, honest and fair manner. Reviews go a long way toward guiding others to become local shoppers – so it's crucial that your reviews are presented authentically rather than as an attack.

Getting Started

Getting information about local businesses, their offerings and the quality of their services can be a bit of a challenge, but the results are worth the extra effort. Here's how to get started.

HEADING OUT

The average local company will provide an opportunity to buy online, in the same way those big-box stores do. But why not take advantage of the opportunity to explore your area this holiday season? Rather than clicking on their website, go see them in person. You'll enjoy improvements in your own health while bolstering the economic well-being of your community. You'll also be spreading some good cheer!

Start learning more about small businesses in your community by dedicating a day to looking around, either on foot or by bike. Access online maps through your phone or tablet to locate fun new places for shopping, dining and entertainment. Make notes about favorite stores, while taking time to engage with the staff.

WHAT TO ASK

Online platforms like Yelp

and Google can provide insights into hometown stores by pairing search results with reviews highlighting your neighbors' opinions. Yelp also features a tab where you can find information about nearby establishments and local deals. While you're there, ask about the company's founding and vision, as

well as key products and their areas of expertise. Gather information including their operating hours, website details and phone number.

OTHER RESOURCES

Another valuable resource is your local chamber of commerce. You can typically find maps or shopping guides in

their offices and chamber personnel can provide key perspectives. For instance, they might connect holiday shoppers with long-standing local companies that bring a wealth of knowledge to their processes and services.

If the chamber isn't nearby, remember that your phone can be a useful tool for

learning about local businesses. Other sites that may provide basic shopping information include Facebook, Nextdoor and the Better Business Bureau. Some may not differentiate between local shops and national chains, but you'll have a list that addresses specific gift-buying needs.



Unique Gift Ideas

The holiday season is one of the best times to celebrate local talent and artistry, since you have a built-in opportunity to share one-of-a-kind handmade pieces with friends and family.

You'll be giving back by supporting local businesses and artisans, while contributing to the prosperity of your community.

Why not take advantage of these unique gift ideas rather than settling for another mass-produced item?

THAT SPECIAL GIFT

Local makers, vendors and growers are out there offering a wide selection of unique gifts, services and delicious treats. Make this season that much more special by exploring this wealth of local creativity and talent. Start by looking for neighborhood holiday markets and fairs.

During this time of the year, you'll often find artisans gathered for these events as city streets are suddenly transformed into lively centers of festive spirit.

Because everything on sale has been made locally, you're likely to find special gifts that are not available in mainstream stores.

THE PERSONAL TOUCH

Shopping locally allows you to connect directly with creators, building relationships based on stories surrounding their products and personal creative journeys.

Ask whether they handle custom orders, create

personalized gifts or accept commissions. Many local businesses specialize in items like engraved jewelry, monogrammed products and custom artwork.

Personal expressions of love and appreciation for friends and family add another layer of meaning to any gift. Remember to respect the artist's policies for commissions and to order well in advance, since you're purchasing their time and creativity as well as a gift.

EXCITING NEW CHOICES

Shopping locally can lead to fun and exciting new choices. Handmade items that you might never have considered could include unusual jewelry, hip clothing designs, exciting artwork or unique decorations that add a special touch to the home. Local artisans and crafters will often be plugged into the latest new trends well before they've reached large retail store shelves — and they always have their own unique point of view. Some hold on to treasured older traditions long after mainstream stores have moved on.

Either way, you'll be going home with items that have a story to tell while adding a one-of-a-kind flair to every gift-giving occasion.





The Gift of Experiences

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Some people seem to have everything. You may worry about older items finding their way into landfills when recipients find that they no longer need or have space for them. If so, consider giving the gift of local experiences this holiday season.

You'll be creating lasting memories while supporting people in your local community.

HISTORY

What has brought your area the most renown? The site of a significant historical moment or person? There may also be special events and festivals devoted to the history and culture of your town. Is there a

museum or landmark dedicated to something unique? What about home tours or distinctive architecture? Too often, those who live near these interesting tourist attractions have never taken the opportunity to visit them. Consider buying passes as gifts for people on your list. You'll bolster local museums, historical sites, state parks and events — and everyone might learn something new.

SPORTS

The holiday season is often marked by huge nationally televised sporting events, including football, basketball and hockey.

Bring special joy to sports enthusiasts by purchasing tickets to their favorite bowl game, playoff contest or match.

You can also buy advance tickets for the next season of games at the nearby college, local minor league park or municipal facility.

Don't forget community events like pickleball contests or a local golf tournament. Create a package that includes game tickets and team merchandise — then get ready to score that autograph from the local sports star!

THE ARTS

The holidays are a great time to purchase individual tickets or season passes for local arts events. Explore options for community and regional theater, touring acts, museum events, dance and opera performances, local symphonies and community bands or choirs. Some arts organizations offer special packages aimed at holiday gift-givers.

You could also simply make a donation to a favorite organization as a holiday present. These gifts are often accompanied by special discounts throughout the rest of the year. Create a special package for a night on the town, with two tickets for an arts event and a gift certificate for a restaurant that's nearby.

Handmade Gift Ideas

Unique handmade gifts help demonstrate how much you care about your loved ones, while offering a chance to give something with a personal touch.

There can be nearly countless possibilities, however, so you may find it difficult to narrow it down. Here's a deeper look at a few handmade items that each make the best gift for the right person:

SHOPPING LOCAL

Aside from boasting loads of charm and a very special point of view, handmade gifts often incorporate locally sourced products or materials. In this way, every one-of-a-kind item brings happiness to the recipients while also supporting multiple layers of local makers and growers. What better way to celebrate the holiday season?

CANDLES

Illuminate the season with the cozy glow of homemade candles. Many use beeswax that's sourced locally. That adds a delightful fragrance and supports local beekeepers. Look for scented candles made with essential oils, or makers who experiment with different molds and colors.



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Each hand-poured candle will end up as its own celebration of the local makers' community.

JOURNALS

Preserve cherished memories, family traditions, creative writing or timeless recipes by seeking out journals with creatively crafted covers. The best employ designs that

reflect the artist's unique point of view; others might be inspired by your local area. You'll often find these special books at local markets and hometown bookshops. There's almost no end to the number of ways the cover of a journal can be adorned. Once it's been gifted, the book becomes even more precious as it's filled. Pair the new journal with

other small locally purchased items to add even more regional flavor to the gift.

BATH AND BODY

Local makers continue to create a remarkable array of luxurious handcrafted bath and body products. Head to local boutiques, farmer's markets and specialty stores to find invigorating scrubs,

soothing bath salts, healing balms and aromatic lotions. They can create a blissful spa-like experience in any home. Be on the lookout for items with a local flair, such as those that have been infused with regionally grown herbs. You'll be honoring the area's contributions to agriculture while tapping into the calming powers of nature.

Shop Local to Help Our Planet

We all play our own unique role in keeping the planet healthy. One perhaps overlooked way is to shop locally. Consider keeping your holiday spending dollars at home this year.

SMALLER FOOTPRINT

Frequenting local sellers this holiday season gives you the opportunity to enjoy excellent personal service while supporting your community. You'll be reducing your carbon footprint. This concept refers to the environmental impact our activities cause, typically measured by the amount of greenhouse gas emissions released into the atmosphere.

You may think you're doing your part by shopping online. But this popular buying activity actually creates many more unwanted outcomes through the shipping process.

Research has shown that people tend to make smaller purchases each time when shopping online, leading to more deliveries and more packaging. Items from a single order might also come from different warehouses, causing more greenhouse gas emissions per item.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Buying local products benefits the economy, minimizes

fuel consumption and reduces the depletion of natural resources. If you drive less, focusing on nearby local offerings, you're helping save the planet. Those who shop online should purchase from local businesses that deliver directly from their store. You'll be supporting your own community and reducing the environmental impact of transportation.

Try to buy only food that's in season, as out-of-season produce often needs to be shipped from far away or is grown in greenhouses – and that further contributes to carbon emissions. Track what's in season and consume locally grown options. You'll be reducing the carbon footprint associated with food transportation and supporting sustainable agriculture.

OTHER KEY TIPS

Expand your shopping list and buy more items at the same time to help reduce the number of trips. Instead of driving to the store multiple times for milk, consider buying three gallons once a week. Combine other shopping trips with your grocery store run to minimize fuel consumption. Carpool, if possible, with others who need something from

the store.

When shopping, prioritize items that use recycled packaging, as indicated by a recycling symbol. Consider investing in sturdy tote bags made of nylon or cloth when shopping, since this reduces the need for disposable bags. By implementing these small changes, we all can create a more earth-friendly shopping experience.



More than Brick and Mortar

Holiday shopping can become one of a family's most treasured annual traditions, creating lasting memories from each season. Those memories become even more vibrant at annual holiday markets, fairs and festivals.

These events provide a one-of-a-kind atmosphere away from brick-and-mortar stores. Let's dive into this unique buying experience.

RICH HISTORY

Holiday markets have a rich history dating back to the Middle Ages in Germany. They've long transformed streets and downtown squares into winter wonderlands adorned with lights and decorations. Vendors originally sold holiday items like ornaments, as street vendors offered beverages and seasonal treats. Festive music and carolers added to the merry atmosphere. Germany still hosts thousands of holiday markets each year, but the tradition has become more widespread – and far more varied in its offerings. Markets in America often have many craft items for sale that aren't holiday themed.



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WHY THEY MATTER

These markets and fairs can serve as the financial lifeblood for local makers and growers. Some may not work out of their own storefronts, or even have a website. You're getting a one-of-a-kind gift in a one-of-a-kind setting. You won't get that kind of buying experience in the aisles of a cookie-cutter big-box store. Meanwhile, you're supporting neighbors who are pursuing their dream as a

small local business person.

WHERE THEY ARE

Look for flyers or ads for annual events when you're out and about. Parks and venues may post calendars of events with more information. The FairsandFestivals.net website can help with locating these events, offering detailed lists of upcoming events within a specific distance from your home. Festivals and fairs may post a

complete list of vendors and their wares, providing helpful information if you'd like to plan your shopping experience. If they don't, be ready for a fun exploration!

PRO TIPS

Bring both cash and credit cards, since some markets may be cash only. The venue may also have limited WiFi access, making credit transactions more difficult. If possible, visit

these fairs at quieter times when you can have meaningful interactions with vendors. Ask about their creative inspiration, how long they've been creating, and the possibility of custom work. All this information goes into your buying decision, while providing context for the gift itself. Remember these are pop-up retail events, not garage sales. Haggling is not usually part of the process.