

# Shop Local



# It's Important to Shop Local

Shopping at small businesses benefits way more than just the business. For every dollar spent at a small business, American Express estimates that an average of \$0.67 stays in that business's community.

"The success of local businesses encourages more entrepreneurs to open shops, offer great jobs and contribute in real, meaningful ways to the local area," Victoria Kidd, owner of the Hideaway Café in Virginia told the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. "It may be hard to see sometimes, but your local dollar comes back to you in a variety of ways every day from sidewalk improvements and more regular trash pickups to adding jobs for more firefighters and hiring more EMTs."

A great way you can support local small businesses is to buy gift cards. That gives the business owner money right away and gives you the chance to introduce someone else to the wonderful work that business does.

"When they go try that business, and love that business, they're going to buy more," Jeff Good, owner of the Broad



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Street Baking Co. in Jackson, Mississippi, told the U.S. Chamber.

The COVID-19 pandemic was particularly hard on small business owners. The number of active business owners in the U.S. dropped by 22% — more than 3 million businesses. That's the largest drop on record and losses were felt across all industries, according to data from the National Library of Medicine. Supply chain issues, worker shortages

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and skyrocketing costs all contributed to the decline.

Adam and Amy Fazackerley own bag company Lay-n-go. They told the U.S. Chamber that the cost of a 40-foot container to ship product from Southeast Asia to the U.S. was previously \$5,000 and is now \$25,000.

Businesses like Lay-n-go, which survived the pandemic, shutdowns and supply chain issues, have since been smacked by inflation and its bite into consumer spending. Seventy-five percent of the 550

small business surveyed in 2022 by Kabbage said inflationary pressures affected their bottom line in the past year and 56% of respondents expected to continue feeling the crunch at least through part of 2023.

"The rise in prices continues to impact us," Sarita Ekya from S'MAC, a New York City restaurant that serves mac 'n' cheese, told Forbes "It is mac 'n' cheese; there is only so much you sell a plate for."

# Farm-to-Table

An interesting new way to shop local is through your weekly grocery shopping.

Thanks to an expansion in and growing awareness of eating and shopping locally, you can now snag more products from your area at your local grocery store.

Here are some ways you can shop locally for your food without breaking the bank.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE

Community supported agriculture is a farming model in which people pledge support to a farm. The farm, in turn, provides food to those families over a period of time. The food is usually fresh, in-season farm goods in levels agreed upon between the farm and consumer.

In this model, the farmer gets the money they need to start planting and growing, and the consumer quite literally reaps the benefits later. It's a great way to find farm-fresh produce and other goods for your family and support local businesses.

## FARMERS MARKETS

Another way to find a veri-



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table cornucopia of local produce is to hit up a local farmers market. The USDA maintains a National Farmers Market Directory that lists any market with two or more farm vendors selling agricultural products directly to customers. Many farmers markets also accept SNAP and other benefits, making them particularly useful to low-income or underserved communities.

## ASK YOUR GROCER

You can always ask your local grocer to stock more foods produced locally and to tag those items for shoppers to find. Many grocery stores are already hip to the eating local trends and are more than happy to help shoppers connect with those items on their shelves.

Publix, a grocery store chain in Florida and across

the South, says it's partnered with local produce growers for 90 years. They boast of locally grown tomatoes, peaches, Vidalia sweet onions, greens, sweet potatoes and more.

## YOU-PICK PRODUCE

This method of sourcing local produce involves a little sweat equity. You pay, in many instances, cheaper prices than

at farmers markets or grocery stores, but you're going to get your hands dirty. You harvest and process the produce for storage yourself, which can be a fun activity and a great way to teach your family about where food comes from. You can find lists of you-pick farms near you from your state department of agriculture or on one of many farm locators online.

# Gift Ideas

Shopping local for gifts, no matter the occasion, is a great idea to snag a one-of-a-kind present. Here are some ideas to get you started.

## FOOD

Everyone has to eat, so food is a great way to send some local love. You can grab local jams and jellies, nuts, cocktail mixes, liquors and other goods. If you're shipping, make sure the items you've chosen can handle the rigors of shipping. Also ask the shop whether they will ship it for you and save you a little bit on cost.

You can also buy gift cards to local restaurants to encourage your recipients to shop and eat locally on their own. If your recipient lives out of town, do your research to find shops and eateries in their area that you think they might enjoy. Many places will now offer gift certificates for sale online.

## ACCESSORIES

Most towns have boutiques or stores where you can find locally crafted fashions, accessories and more at a great price. These items make great gifts, ship easily and often make a great impression on your recipient. Every time they wear those earrings, open that wallet or tie that tie, they'll think of you.



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## BOOKS

Local bookstores are not only hubs of local knowledge, but supporting this local business in particular often trickles down to local authors and artists in your community. Your local bookseller is often

an expert on titles set in your area or about your area, so you can give a little slice of your community to your friends and family.

Since 2020, the website [bookshop.org](https://bookshop.org) has raised more than \$24 million for independent

bookstores, meaning you can even support a bookstore in the city where your recipient lives. Or, you can choose a title from [bookshop.org](https://bookshop.org) and have the money go into a profit-sharing pool that helps all of the more than 1,000 stores on the site.

“These funds mean more than money,” says Fawn Fernandes, owner of the Curious Capybara Bookshop in Hendersonville, Tennessee. “It means community to me. And for that, I will be forever grateful.”

# How to Buy Original Artwork

You don't have to be uber-rich to collect art, particularly art from your community or from communities that are important to you.

Showcasing local art in your home can show off your personality, your heritage, your hobbies and more. And it supports culture right in your hometown.

"It's easy to fall into the trap of ... thinking that taste equals the amount you spend or where you bought it," Colleen Cash, a senior vice president at online art auction platform Artnet, told *The Washington Post*. "I think some of the most beautiful collections are the ones that have meaningful stories."

Art doesn't come down to the price tag or where you bought it. It should be a piece that speaks to you, that tells a story that's meaningful to you or your family. Buying art can also be a way to support artists from marginalized communities or who work toward causes important to you.

If you're on a budget, look for lower-end media, such as drawings, photographs and other works on paper. You can also collect prints, which are usually made in limited-edition runs. The smaller the edition number, the more rare the work is and, generally, the more valuable the print.



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Local galleries are also a great way to get into collecting original art. Don't be intimidated. Those galleries are there to sell art and may even offer financing.

The Marshall Gallery in Scottsdale, Arizona, encourages shoppers to be upfront about their budget and to ask questions before paying up. Artists and gallery owners are

often more than happy to answer questions about the pieces and can even point you to other artwork that can complement it or that you might like better.

You can also attend student shows at your local college or university and pick up some great pieces for a song. And who knows? That work by today's budding artist might be

worth something when they wind up one of their generation's great masters.

"Buying works by new graduates before they get taken on by galleries is a very affordable way to start your collection (once they are taken on by a gallery, their prices are likely to double), as well as being a critical time to support artists at an early stage in their

careers," Saatchi Art Assistant Curator Monty Preston told *Refinery29*.

Preston suggests grabbing pieces that improve your mood and arrange them in a gallery style wall. These smaller artworks can be less expensive than larger pieces, will tell a story and are also more flexible for future living spaces.

# Finding Local Services

Shopping local is more than just buying food and other tangible goods. You can also shop local for services that your family might use regularly. Here are some ideas to get you started.

## CLEANING SERVICES

Ever just look at your space and get overwhelmed? Look for a local cleaning service to tidy up your place. It can be just one big clean or you can even make it a regular visit. Decide what parts of your home need work the most and make sure to tidy up before your cleaner gets there. The first cleaning, which tends to take the longest, may cost extra than subsequent regular visits.

## FLORISTS

Sending flowers is easy online, we give you that, but by talking to a local florist, you can find great deals and put together a truly breathtaking bouquet that's well within your budget. Local florists know what flowers they have that are in season (and therefore easier on the wallet) and may also offer local gifts to augment your arrangement that aren't available from the larger services. Just look for florists in the town where you want flowers delivered, call and talk to the shop directly. Most



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shops will also take payment over the phone.

## CAR DETAILING

There's nothing like stepping into a freshly cleaned car that looks like it did the day it rolled off the lot. And for busy families, cleaning the car

where they spend a lot of their time together is an amazing gift that they wouldn't necessarily do for themselves. A good detail is different from a regular car wash in that they really work down in the cracks and crevices, often taking apart your seats and even some

of your car's trim to really get it clean.

## PET GROOMING

Bathing and clipping our animal friends is never an easy task. Instead, turn that over to the pros. Pet grooming salons offer your pooch or your feline

friend a full spa day of pampering. More than just baths, these salons may also offer treatments to help repel pests or stop shedding, and the pros there know how to get your four-legged friend squeaky clean without hurting them or your feelings.

# Shopping Local Craftspeople

Akin to shopping for services is shopping with local craftspeople.

Tailors, cobblers, furniture makers are some of the craftsmen or women that may be available in your area and who, over time, might just save you a ton of money.

## TAILORS

Tailors are there not only to repair clothing but to alter it to make sure it fits you in the most flattering way. Ready-to-wear clothing is, yes, intended for you to wear straight off the rack. But it was never intended to replace tailoring it to your exact specifications. Instead, the sizes are meant to represent an average, and to fit you properly, need to be altered in subtle ways to really fit your frame.

Ask your friends and family — especially those that always look put together — about tailors near you. You can also ask local boutiques where they refer customers. Expect to be asked to try on the clothing for the tailor and have an idea of what you want them to do. Also keep an open mind, however, on what suggestions they may have.

## COBBLER

Cobblers repair and make shoes. But they can also fit your shoes to you to relieve foot problems or other aches and pains, save expensive shoes or give shoes a new life.



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And, yes, there's probably one working near you that can take a look at any problem shoes and make repairs to keep you stepping out in style.

## FURNITURE REPAIR AND REFINISHING

These are the expert craftspeople that can breathe new life into your family heirlooms

and prolong the lives of the pieces that are closest to your heart. While many people are more than happy tackling furniture restoration in their own garage, some pieces and projects call for expert hands. They can perform such services as stripping, refinishing and repairing pieces using techniques and palettes that

are contemporary to the piece in question. Upholstery shops can also add new fluff and coverings to pieces that need a bit of cushion.

## MUSICAL INSTRUMENT REPAIR

Much like furniture repair, musical instrument repair and maintenance is an art form

that requires expert knowledge. They will know the best way to get grandpa's violin working in tune again, giving a cherished family heirloom new life. For some instruments, this may present an opportunity to get a quality instrument at a more budget-friendly price point than buying on the open market.

# Supporting Local Restaurants

COVID-19 changed a lot about American life, and one of the local businesses hardest hit was restaurants.

Since March 2020, the onset of the pandemic in the U.S., 33.5 million people lost jobs in the hospitality industry, which includes restaurant workers. On average, restaurants laid off 91% of their hourly workforce and 70% of salaried employees.

Many of those laid-off employees didn't return after restaurants reopened, leaving many eateries pinched for staff. A National Restaurant Association survey showed that 87% of restaurants say they're likely to hire in 2023 if they can find applicants.

And that's a big if.

Between October 2021 and March 2022, there were an average of 500,000 more job openings than new hires in the hospitality sector per month. At the start of 2023, a survey by OpenTable showed that the restaurant industry was still 3.6% below pre-pandemic levels. More than 60% of operators say they can't staff up to meet demands and 80% say they have a hard time filling open positions.

This means that today's diners need to be patient. Service times may take longer, even for the increasingly popular delivery and drive-through options. Some dishes may be



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unavailable and your favorite spots' hours may be adjusted, sometimes dramatically and sometimes on short notice.

Restaurant owners should consider streamlining services where they can, OpenTable says, including using digital ordering platforms and a POS system that integrates with

reservations for seamless communication. They should also focus on attracting top talent with pay and benefits and perks such as earned wage access, or on-demand pay, to compensate staff for shifts worked before payday.

Owners can also reach out to local organizations and

schools, partnering with culinary training programs to give students the hours of experience they need to launch their careers.

"I was very, very impressed when I saw the energy and skills and knowledge they were bringing to the company," Michael Pythoud, culi-

nary director of the Walt Disney World Deluxe Resorts, said of working with Auguste Escoffier School of Culinary Arts students. "One of our responsibilities as professionals is to pass on our knowledge. And knowledge you get from practice, education and mentorship."