

# Buying Local is More Important Than You May Think



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From time-to-time you hear the cliché “buy local.” You’re told it is important to buy local, but rarely hear about the real impact of choosing a local independent business over nationwide corporate chains. For example, eating at No Problemo in downtown New Bedford or La Raza Taqueria on Acushnet Avenue as opposed to Taco Bell or Chipotle Mexican Grill.

Most of the research points out that much more of your money is recirculated back into the local economy when you choose to spend your hard earned money at a locally owned business.

For example, **Civic Economics**, a private research firm, states that only 13% of money spent at a chain retailer gets recirculated back into the local economy compared to 48% with a locally owned independent retailer. So nearly half your money goes back into the local economy when you shop at The Bedford Merchant compared to Walmart or Target.

According to Civic Economics, the number is even higher for restaurants. Local restaurants recirculate 65% of the money back into the economy compared to 35% for chain restaurants.

## **Some Local Business are More Local Than Others**

Not all independent locally owned businesses are created or operate equally. The more a business purchases locally owned

products the more they contribute to the local economy. For example, if a restaurant buys everything from a national food distributor like Costco they are not circulating as much into the local economy as the restaurants that purchase from local farmers. The same goes for retailers. Buy everything from China or other states and you contribute less than the retailer that buys locally produced products. For example, each December the UGLY Gallery hosts their CRAFT-O-RAMA offering holiday items produced by local craft makers.

### **Consumers Are in the Driver's Seat**



The consumer wields all the power and can drive change with even the largest corporations. One just has to look at the organic movement over the last decade to see how nationally owned retailers changed their purchasing. As more and more people demanded organic products, corporations like Walmart and grocery stores made more room on their shelves for organic products. Non-GMO products seem to be making headway today. If more shoppers made a conscious effort to shop from locally owned businesses and demanded locally produced products the major retailers would take notice.

### **The constant demand for the cheapest**

As long as we demand the cheapest product made in China or the cheapest meal, not much will change. You'll continue to send money overseas and less of your money will get recirculated into the local economy. Don't be surprised when you open the newspaper and read that New Bedford has the worst unemployment

rate in Massachusetts. The good news is it isn't too late to change your shopping habits.

Ready to make a change? Ready to do more than just buy a 'Buy Local' bumper sticker? Here are 5 Tips for Buying Local:

### **1. Purchase a Community Sustainable Agriculture (CSA) farm share**

Local farms are a great way to start. They hire local labor and grow their product near you. Buy your produce at a large chain grocery store and chances are the produce was shipping in from another country let alone from another state. CSAs are a great way to support local labor, local owners and of course eat healthy. When in season shop at your local farmers' markets.

### **2. Support your local grocery store FIRST, then your larger chains**

In the Greater New Bedford area there are dozens of local ethnic mom and pop grocery stores and farmers' markets. Get your *linguica* locally produced instead of purchasing something shipped in. It may be nearly impossible to buy everything you need at a local grocery store, but start there first before heading to Market Basket.

### **3. Stop eating at chain restaurants**

As mentioned, eat at local restaurants and most of your money will stay local. Additionally, fast food restaurants are notorious for low quality meats and terrible wages and benefits. That dollar menu comes at a price.

### **4. Support local retailers**

Due to the raw size of Walmart and Target, and fewer and fewer small retailers, it may be impossible to get everything that you need at a local retailer. One suggestion I would offer is to buy all your gift items for friends and family at local

retailers. Again, pick the retailers that buy things that are produced locally.

**5. Every time you spend money ask yourself, “where is this money going?”**

Finally, the best way to ensure that most of your money gets recirculated back into the local economy is to stop and think every time you shop. Ask the question, “where is this money going?” Think of the purchasing cycle. If you buy a sandwich at a chain restaurant chances are all of the food was shipped in from out of the area. The restaurant workers are getting the lowest wage possible with few benefits. This question can be asked in ALL situations from website design, marketing your business to buying a car. Before you head out to spend your money make a conscious effort to ensure your money stays local.

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