

Great Opportunities to Shop Local

By: Veronica Cool 🕒 November 18, 2016



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Thanksgiving is this week, and we will barely finish stuffing our faces, after going back for second and third servings (don't worry, no judgment here!), before we lose our minds and enter the Holiday Shopping Season. Otherwise known as the salvation for the retail industry: Black Friday!

Shop Local/ Small Business Saturday! (And Every Other Day!)

As much as I love a good bargain, I see the triple benefit of buying local — bringing our dollars back to the local entrepreneurs, who retain the dollars and profits to employ local workers, and lastly the taxes collected fuel our local infrastructure.

So please shop locally, not just because it's Small Business Saturday, but because our local economy flourishes when you spend locally. And, yes, on occasion, you may pay a bit more for gifts and purchases, but I can assure you that you will uncover unique and wondrous treasures. Check out these fabulous local businesses:

aMuse Toys, Baltimore

aMuse Toys is an indie toy store, family owned and operated. Established by Colombian-native Claudia Knowles in 2006, aMuse brings innovative and engaging toys, from all over the world. Every time I go in there, I come away with a toy (let's be honest, more than one toy!) that creates the joy of "play" for my children and friends.

SPAGnVOLA Chocolatier, Gaithersburg

SPAGnVOLA was just selected among the top 10 chocolatiers in the world by National Geographic magazine. Right here in Maryland! The chocolatier, Crisoire Reid, hails from the Dominican Republic, where along with her husband, Eric Reid they own a cocoa farm that yields the cocoa bean used in Maryland for their glorious bonbons, truffles and bars. And if this wasn't awesome enough, you can do a behind-the-scenes tour of The Truffle Factory and experience this exquisite treat firsthand.

Juan of Kind Foods, Baltimore

Juan of Kind (Get it? Juan and One of Kind) uses traditional and very exotic ingredients to create very savory and fresh sauces and marinades. This family-owned venture started super-local at farmers' markets across Baltimore and has now expanded to local stores and restaurants. The products stem from Peruvian-born Juan Barbaran's family recipe and can now be purchased on their online store (very much locally produced in Maryland).

Sergio's Jewelers, Ellicott City

I can't say that the diamonds are mined in Maryland, but Sergio's Jewelers is most definitely a local institution in Ellicott City. Exceptional service, magnificent attention to detail and gorgeous pieces to commemorate our very special life moments.

Running Hare Vineyard, Prince Frederick

Running Hare became a commercial operation in 2008 producing over 100,000 bottles of wine to date, including wines reminiscent of Argentinian and Chilean varieties. And in 2015, Running Hare expanded into the craft beer industry, launching Calvert Brewing Company. I don't know about you, but a nice bottle of Malbec or chilled beer would be a very nice gift. All of the above feature Latino entrepreneurs or Latin American products, further emphasizing the contribution of the Hispanic entrepreneur within our region. These retailers are part of the larger pool of 54,000 Hispanic businesses across Maryland.

Hopefully I have introduced businesses that will soon become your new favorites and that you take the time, and dollars, to patronize; in essence that you shop locally. But what about the opposite side of the coin? What if you are a retailer seeking to draw the local shopper?

Are you aware that, in Maryland, there are approximately 557,000 Latinos, per the 2016 USHLI Almanac? And that we have larger and younger families? With a median income of \$63,020?

Latinos have similar purchasing habits as mainstream Americans. We want to see the joy on our children's face on Christmas morning. We want the latest technology. We seek the trendiest clothing and shoes (especially me!) So how do you woo them into YOUR store?

Start with your advertising: Are you on Facebook? Remember that the latest reports show 65 percent of the Latino community in the United States is actively on Facebook.

Then look at your language: Depending on how you segment your clients, acculturation, age, socio-economic status, education, geography, etc., will drive what language you should be using to communicate. Is it Spanish, English, Spanglish? Or all three?

Let's look at your media buys: Again, depending on your client segmentation, you may need to invest or reallocate your media dollars into local, in-language media outlets, such as newspapers, radio and digital channels.

Lastly, ensure that your team is cultural-competent. After drawing the Latino traffic to your store, don't bungle the sale, cross-sales and client retention by having staff that is untrained on this diverse market. Be sensitive to language or cultural barriers. Don't dismiss a shopper who has an accent or who is dressed too casually: Their dollars are still green. And if you are struggling with gift ideas for me ... I would happily accept (and thoroughly enjoy, savor, cherish) gifts from any of the fine establishments mentioned above. Amigos, go forth and shop LOCALLY!

Veronica Cool is founder of Cool & Associates LLC, a business management firm specializing in financial wellness and diverse segment marketing. Her column appears twice a month in The Daily Record and online. Contact her at Veronica@CoolAssociatesLLC.com. Follow her on Twitter at [@verocool](https://twitter.com/verocool).

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