

How to support local businesses during mandatory restrictions

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus COVID-19 throughout the United States in March 2020 transformed American lives in ways many might never have imagined possible. Social distancing recommendations and restrictions on gatherings of more than a handful of people had a ripple effect on the economy that adversely affected many small businesses.

Small businesses are the backbones of local communities. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, small businesses make up 99.9 percent of all businesses in the United States and employ 59.9 million employees. The SBA notes that the accommodation and food services sector is the second largest small business industry. Many of these businesses have been hit especially hard as more and more of their regular customers stay at home in the wake of government advisories promoting social distancing.

But small businesses are vital to local communities, and there are ways to support them and help them stay afloat as they confront the challenges posed by the COVID-19 outbreak.

- Order delivery. It's still possible to enjoy foods from your favorite local restaurants. Many restaurants that had not previously done

so have begun to offer delivery services, be it curbside or at-home, and this can provide a great respite for families who have had to cook three meals a day at home for their entire families for extended periods of time. Curbside delivery has made it possible to get takeout meals without compromising social distancing recommendations.

- Recognize that more than food is available for takeout. In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, Governor Andrew Cuomo of New York announced relaxations on laws governing what can and cannot be obtained via takeout, allowing takeout on goods that were previously restricted in regard to takeout. For example, Cuomo announced that the New York State Liquor Authority intended to temporarily relax regulations regarding the takeout and delivery of alcohol. Utilizing such services can be a great way to support local businesses while still adhering to recommendations designed to slow the spread of COVID-19.

- Purchase a gift card. Gift cards can help small businesses generate revenue at a time when their doors are largely closed to the public. This can be vital to these businesses survival, and it gives consumers something to look forward when life returns to normal.



- Help market local businesses. Spread the word when local businesses deliver in the wake of the restrictions put on them due to COVID-19. Share these experiences via social media or online reviews, and urge your neighbors to

patronize these businesses.

Local businesses are suffering during the COVID-19 outbreak. But communities can come together to support business owners and their employees to help these vital businesses stem the tide.

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