

Take the Buy British challenge: how to shop local for all your Christmas gifts

Want to do all of your Christmas shopping with UK brands this year? Here's how...

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The best Made in Britain products to buy this Cyber Weekend

The independent British designer Fiona Clare gets a little boost every time an order is placed in her online shop. "I go up and down with worrying about the business," she admits. "But then an order comes through and I'll be really excited."

Can you imagine the same sort of reaction happening at, say, a giant, multinational e-tailer this Black Friday, as a robotic arm picks your presents off the shelf?

As a customer who has attempted to shop exclusively British for almost a month now, I can attest that the Google searching does take longer, the delivery windows are less reliable, and, overall, each order placed probably costs me a few pounds more than it might have if I had opted to shop with a hyper-fast, mega-cheap, world-dominating alternative.

But there is a lovely feeling of satisfaction that comes with each package that arrives - the knowledge that I'm spending with a local business and that my Christmas shopping might go some small way to saving a few more Brits from redundancies come January.

After a year like no other, the British retail industry is on its knees, with store closures and mass lay-offs happening across the high street. Yet in a YouGov survey conducted in July, 64 percent of Brits said that after the spring lockdown, they wanted to support local businesses and products.

Want to [buy less, buy better quality, and buy British](#)? Now's the time to put our money where our mouths are, as pausing to think before piling all of your Christmas shopping into one big virtual basket this Black Friday could make a huge difference.

"A business owner's greatest gift this Christmas could be you discovering their brand and shopping with them for the first time," says Tara Capp, founder of British lifestyle brand Truly, noting that spreading your spending across multiple companies is the best thing you can do. "I do understand that convenience is key. But try and share the love and explore other small British brands who offer fantastic and affordable products and would welcome you with open arms into their community."



Made in Anglesey - Green stripe pyjamas, £135, [pivan.co.uk](#); **Made in London** - Liberty print silk face covering, £48, [fionaclare.co.uk](#); **Made in Aberdeenshire** - Mens Fairisle jumper, £124, [bosie.co](#); **Made in London** - Hand knitted wool scarf, £86, [birdsong.london](#); **Made in Hawick** - Alphabet lambswool jumper, £220, [hades-shop.co.uk](#)

To shop successfully this way, you need to think beyond the obvious. When running through someone's Christmas list, particularly children's, there will be some items that are easy to find at an alternative, British-based online shop. It can be as simple as ordering the toys on their list from The Entertainer, or the books you know they wanted from WH Smith, or Bookshop.org, which unites the stock of local bookshops in Britain on one website.

But some of the best items I've found so far (and the ones that will make the most memorable presents) have taken a little more research. So far I've sent homemade brownies by post to people I know I won't see, from Gower Cottage Brownies, based in Swansea and bought customised cards from The Papercut Emporium in Ellesmere.

I've swerved an incident with my sister-in-law, who Whatsapped Amazon links to toy wooden tea sets for my three-year-old niece, instead finding one by JoJo Maman Bebe - sounds French, but is in fact based in Newport, employing around 800 people. I was particularly pleased that even the toy biscuits were Jammy Dodgers and Custard Creams.

What has been more tricky is to guarantee that products, as well as coming from British based companies, were also made in Britain. For the purists (or the patriots) attempting this retail challenge, shopping online is the trickiest, as most retailers do not state the country of manufacture in their product description.

All of the items pictured in the merchandise map on this page have been made in Britain. Along the way I've found amazing small brands to recommend, from [PJ Pan](#), which makes its luxury men's, women's and children's pyjamas in Anglesey, to the St Eval Candle Company, making beautiful scented candles, reed diffusers and hand soaps from a farm in North Cornwall, with average prices at around £10.



Made in Melrose - Cashmere ear warmer, £79, [rosiesugden.com](#); **Made in Stoke-on-Trent** - Constellation plates, from £12, [truly.co.uk](#); **Made in Orford** - Drinking chocolate, £12.50, [pumpstreetchocolate.com](#); **Made in St Eval** - Winter thyme candles, from £15.50, [st-eval.com](#); **Made in London** - Honey fern gold plated earrings, £135, [alexmonroe.com](#); **Made in Stockbridge** - Handmade dog collar, £24, [stockyandlee.com](#)

For anyone who doesn't feel they have the time to hunt for British-made treasures, I'd suggest Etsy and Trouva as two websites which let you filter by the location of the maker. The former is particularly good for crafty stocking stuffers, such as handmade jewellery from Peaches and Tea in Newbury, or custom garden signage by OneDay Woodshop in Huddersfield.

Over this Black Friday weekend I plan to whittle off most of what's left on my list, not because there are unmissable competitive, race-to-the bottom offers to be had, but because I know that smaller companies typically need longer lead times and some will be (hopefully) inundated with orders in the weeks to come.

The micro-retailers are important, but the big British brands are too. Even if it's not possible to find everything you're after with a tiny local firm, it will still count some way towards 'doing your bit' if you shop at Next, Marks & Spencer, John Lewis & Partners, Liberty, Selfridges and so on, all of which have struggled this year too, and employ thousands around the UK.

This isn't a charity campaign. There's no need to buy things you don't want or need, nor to spend more than you intend to on presents. But, rather than contributing to the crippling, unsustainable Black Friday race to the bottom this year, actions like this may just provide an antidote.

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