

the

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Small Business Saturday is November 28th!

As the end of November draws nearer, so does the 11th annual Small Business Saturday. Falling between the crowded doorbusters of Black Friday, and the dominant online deals of Cyber Monday, Small Business Saturday encourages you to support your community by shopping local.

Small Business Saturday was created in 2010 to help support the ailing 'mom-and-pop' stores amid the great recession. Now, in 2020, supporting your favorite local businesses is more important than ever. A single purchase can benefit a large portion of your community. For every product you buy, someone had to source it, someone had to stock it, and someone sold it to you. Studies show that for every dollar spent locally, about sixty-seven cents will go right back into your community. What a great investment!

So on Saturday, November 28th, shop small and shop safely!

(Keep a lookout for Small Business Saturday deals at the Co-op, to be announced very soon.)

UPCOMING EVENTS

11/24 Board of Directors
Meeting - 5:30 PM

11/26 Thanksgiving -
Co-op Closed

12/24 Christmas Eve
Co-op Closes at 3PM

12/25 Christmas Day
Co-op Closed

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Is the Green Wash Always Greener?

A few newsletters ago, we asked you (if you were reading this in your kitchen) to go to your pantry and select a random box, look at the packaging and count all the different labels you see professing the product's quality. If you can, do this again. Chances are you'll see an array of different logos and words: an organic certification, a fair trade logo, "earth-friendly", "all-natural", "cruelty-free" to name a few common ones. What do these words mean? Who's regulating them? What's the criteria? Unfortunately, sometimes these words and certifications are simply a tactic used by companies to give a false impression of being environmentally sound. The term for this is called greenwashing. But what even is greenwashing?

Greenwashing is an advertising strategy used by corporations involving misleading, deceptive, or false information about the environmental sustainability of a product, service, or the entire company itself. A company using greenwashing tactics will spend more money and time on marketing themselves as a "green company" than actually making changes to help reduce their carbon footprint. Now more than ever, consumers are realizing the importance of sustainable practices and social responsibility, but the added pressure hasn't necessarily made all companies swap their air pollution, land devastation, or plastic use for more environmentally sound options. During a time when the impact of climate change and importance of sustainable practices is so imminent, many large companies have found ways to trick consumers into believing that they are making a positive, helpful choice to the environment when in actuality they are contributing to the problem itself. Companies may focus on meaningless, vague words, unreliable eco-logos, and irrelevant facts to showcase themselves as sustainable businesses in order to get consumers to believe they are making a "green" choice

How it Works

Greenwashing works by distraction, almost like dangling an organic carrot in front of us while pesticides are sprayed behind. Although a alarming, greenwashing works. It allows consumers to believe they are living green, but changing nothing when it comes to sustainability. For companies that are greenwashing on purpose, this looks like Coca Cola marketing a new 'naturally' sweetened cola to gain health conscious consumers, even though this new drink changed little to none of its health impacts. Or Fiji water, whose marketing campaigns lead consumers to believe they are leaving nature untouched, with the truth being water packaged in plastic and needing intensive transportation to be shipped worldwide. According to the World Health Organization, "47% of Fijians don't have access to clean, safe drinking water". Plastic water bottle companies are one of the leading offenders of greenwashing; many of them decked out in pretty colors, green grass fields, mountains with streams in the back. The truth is that plastic water bottles will never be sustainable, regardless of the scenic photographs doted on the labels on the front. However, as consumers, we see those pictures and think "Hey! Isn't planet Earth beautiful?" The goal is to see past those schemes, but how do we start? How do we recognize them?and can also help reduce food deserts in urban areas.



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Meaningless, Vague Umbrella Terms

If you were to go into your pantry again, or go to the “green” section of your grocery store, you would probably see some variant of the word “natural” on many of the products: “from nature”, “natural”, “all natural.” For some reason, we see this word (along with other buzzwords) and without even taking a look at the ingredients, assume that these products are better for us and better for the environment. What does “natural” even mean? Companies will use words like this without backing them up, or providing any proof or comparison because legally there are no definitions of what this word should mean. It could simply mean that one ingredient, out of the 25 ingredients, at one time, was derived from the earth, a plant, or an animal and was likely highly processed since then. On another hand, elements like mercury and arsenic are also considered “natural”. It’s important to be aware of terms that are lacking in specifics. Check out our article on page 5 for a deeper look into common green buzzwords.

Eco Labeling

Official and legitimate labels on our favorite products may not be as official as legitimate as we would like to believe. In fact, sometimes these reassuring claims have no basis other than the manufacturer’s word. A eco-label suggests that a third party organization approved the product and it met the criteria standards for the certification. Although there are many legitimate ecolabels out there, (Fair Trade Certified, Green Seal, USDA organic) there are just as many if not more non legitimate ones. Take the term “biodegradable” in a bright green label on the side of your shampoo bottle. Sure, it looks official. There’s a checkmark next to it even. But a quick online search yields no evidence of any certification of this claim. Investigation is the best way to avoid falling victim to ecolabeling greenwashing schemes. Be sure to check for internationally known certifications to feel confident about the product choices you’re making.

Irrelevant Information

Up until this point, we’ve looked at different tactics of greenwashing where the company is intentionally misleading or lying to their consumers about the environmental impact of their product. A company may make an environmental claim that is truthful, but it is unimportant and unhelpful in terms of customers seeking environmentally sound products. The most frequent example of this are products that contain the label “NO CFCs” or “No HCFCs”.



According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), “the HCFC ban is effective January 1, 1994. The CFC ban is effective January 17, 1994. After those dates, no person may distribute or sell such products in interstate commerce.” CFCs and HCFCs have been banned for nearly 30 years; companies highlighting the fact that they are following the law is irrelevant. It’s like a tattoo shop with a sign saying “sterilized tattooing”. This information is designed to make a customer think they are helping the ozone with their purchase, but in actuality, the companies are just doing what is required of them by law.

Do Your Research

The best way to combat greenwashing marketing tactics is to do your research. In most cases, an online search can tell a person everything they need to know about a company. Consider the brand as a whole, as opposed to a single product from the company. A business with many sustainable products will consider “being green” as a lifestyle and not just an advantage against their competitors. In order to stop falling for these greenwashing tactics, we have to be critical thinkers. The next time you go to your grocery store, take a look at the packaging and read the labels and educate yourself on the products you buy. Does the company seem interested in making money or being environmentally sustainable? Don’t take everything they say at face value. Crunch those numbers. Research those claims. Find the evidence that supports the assertion the company is making. We have to keep asking questions, keep researching, and keep our expectations high if we want to continue moving forward for a greener future. We’re going to continue to look at our products at the SPAC critically to make sure they meet all of our high standards.

EDIBLE FOODLIKE SUBSTANCES

Life is busy and hectic. We all get so caught up in the rush of it all that it's easy to forget to take care of yourself. We have our go to easy meals that we turn to when we've had a long stressful day. Just throw in a pizza. Grab some Taco Johns on your way home. Cook up some mac and cheese and be done with it. While it may give you comfort and relief in the moment, eating a lot of highly processed food can have a negative impact on your overall health, making you feel worse in the long run.

When maintaining a healthy lifestyle, what you eat is just as important as exercise. Whole foods can make all the difference in lowering stress levels, providing your body with enough energy to get through the day, and giving you all the essential nutrients you need to stay healthy. Eating well can also have a positive impact on your mental health.

It is also important to understand what it means when a food is processed. For example, foods that are frozen, prewashed, canned, or precooked are considered processed because the food has been altered in some way. That's not to say that this form of processing is harmful. On the contrary, frozen vegetables often have more nutrients than fresh vegetables because they are frozen at their peak freshness.

What you eat is just as important as exercise.

Highly processed foods, however, have been dramatically altered from their natural state and are packed with preservatives. These foods usually have little to no nutritional value. Two main ingredients in highly processed foods are sodium and added sugar. Avoiding foods with added sugar is often a great first step to a healthier lifestyle. The good news is that many fruits and vegetables are naturally sweet and make great replacements if you want to add a hint of sweetness. For example, when I make pancakes from scratch, I add 2 bananas to the batter instead of sugar which provides just the right amount of sweetness! Finding creative ways to use fruits to sweeten up your dish instead of sugar can go a long way and still allow you to enjoy your favorite treats. Sodium isn't inherently bad. We do require a healthy level of sodium per day to stay healthy. The issue is, like sugar, we are almost always consuming more sodium than we actually need.

Therefore, eating whole foods such as whole grains, beans, nuts, leafy greens, and other fresh vegetables that are in their natural form are the best options when choosing what to eat.

Making food from scratch will allow you much for control over how much sugar or sodium is in your food. At the end of the day, it's always important to remember that we're all human beings with various tastes and there are many different ways to make sure you're eating healthy. Just find what works for you. Ask family and friends about their favorite recipes. Ask your local grocer how they utilize those veggies. There are so many possibilities out there for making healthy and delicious meals so start exploring!

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COMMON “GREEN” BUZZWORDS

Corporations who engage in greenwashing have several tactics they use to convince the consumer that their products are environmentally friendly. One tactic is using words that sound attractive to the consumer but these words are not regulated by the USDA and are essentially meaningless. Another tactic is vagueness. Instead of providing information up front to support their claims, they strive for more attention grabbing and flashy terminology. Terms like “chemical free”, “recycled”, “free range/cage free”, and “all natural” are all examples of words that are often used on labels of products but are not backed by any kind of regulation. Chemical free is an instant red flag as everything is made up of chemicals. From your delicious fruits and vegetables all the way to your very self. This is an example of labeling that is just factually incorrect. It’s only goal is to sound safe and friendly by playing into the stigma of the word “chemical”.

When a label claims that a product is made of recycled materials, it may only contain .05% recycled material. It is vague and they do not provide any further information to support their claim that their product is fully recycled. This is an example of how corporations may mislead the consumer by stating something that may be technically correct, and yet it hardly does anything to actually help the environment in an impactful way.

Now to some degree, the terms free range and cage free are regulated by the USDA, however, the only requirements are that the animals be allowed access to the outdoors. They do not evaluate for how long these animals are allowed outdoors so corporations are able to get away with this label and still keep their livestock largely confined.

All natural is a perfect example of vagueness. It sounds good but what does it actually mean? The FDA has not formally defined the word “natural” and therefore does not regulate its use. As an alternative, you’ll want to look for the label “organic” instead. This term is regulated by the USDA and should sport the USDA ORGANIC stamp somewhere on the packaging. This means that the product cannot be produced with any antibiotics, growth hormones, pesticides, bioengineering, or ionizing radiation.

There are many other terms I have not listed that are also used when greenwashing a product. The key is to pay attention to those red flags: vagueness, fibbing, and directly withholding important information. Don’t be afraid to do your own research on products you’re considering buying.

v

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Featured Products

Take a look at some of our products with few (less than 6) ingredients. All natural products, without the “green” jargon.



South Central Wisconsin Hemp Cooperative, CBD oil

This cooperative was founded in 2019 and is a producer led Co-op focused on growing and marketing the highest quality of Certified Organic Hemp throughout the South Central Wisconsin area. They focus on creating a local-focused supply chain which includes but not limited to the production and supplies, testing, and processing. They collaboratively create the highest quality product line available with integrity and intentionality as well as a dedication to organic and cooperative principles. The particular product we carry has only two ingredients, MCT coconut oil and CBD hemp extract, to bring much needed wellness and relief through safe, effective, and natural plant healing products.



Nick's Sticks, Turkey Sticks - Nick's sticks are made with free range turkey, handcrafted locally in small batches. They are an awesome source of protein without any of the sugar or other additives that are in some brand of meat sticks, without sacrificing flavor or taste. As they like to say “all of the goodness, none of the garbage.”



Honey Acres, Dark Chocolate Mint Honey Patties - Honey Acres is a family owned and operated business that can be traced back 160 years! There have been five generations of this beekeeping family. Each member of the team plays an important role in the success and operation of the business and together they strive to produce only the finest quality products for their customers. The chocolate patties contain only 3 simple ingredients - honey, chocolate, and peppermint oil. Buy a whole bag to share (or not!) or by them by the each. We also carry the honey patties in raspberry, orange, and cacao.

Have a suggestion?

Have an idea?

Email one of our board members with your thoughts!

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Bicycle Delivery, Cranked Out

Times are changing and things are weird this year! So, what better time to start a new business, right? Curbwise LLC is now here and rollin' and you as SPA Co-op members can now take advantage of getting your groceries delivered by bicycle every week, year-round. Over the summer, this new partnership formed between my new biz and your friendly Co-op. I'm able to take care of the routing, transportation logistics, people-power, and business insurance while the Co-op expands its community reach continuing its valued tradition of supplying you the local and/or organic produce, bulk goods, and other goodies you need.

Not only am I excited to crank my legs navigating the Stevens Point streets as I have been year-round for 22 years, I'm also ecstatic that I can further live my values of cutting my and others' carbon footprints. According to the EPA's numbers on the average car's emissions, together we can lower your carbon footprint by 1-2 kilograms of CO2 on each delivery. Pretty cool, I must say!

I also love connecting grocery shoppers with their favorite Co-op foods in a convenient way, one that's quick, fun, and people-powered. Even though we're providing contactless delivery, I find this new social connection between me and Co-op members to be an enjoyable experience, one that's more personal and allows me to share a smile with new folx (under my mask, of course).

This service will be all-weather too; well, short of a tornado or massive lighting storm. Thanks for this new collaboration, Co-op friends. Let's roll!

-Trevor

Get your groceries via curbwise bicycle delivery by visiting the Co-op website today (spacoop.com) or calling to place an order (715-341-1555). To find out more about Curbwise LLC (gocurbwise.com).

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