

An American Tradition: ‘Shop, Dine Small’ on Small Business Saturday®

Taken from an article By Tim Jeffcoat, Director, Houston District Office of the U.S. Small Business Administration

On November 26, I encourage you to join millions of Texans and other Americans to “shop and dine small” on Small Business Saturday®, which has become an American tradition. Small businesses represent the dynamic demographics of Southeast Texas, encompassing everyone from your delicious, unique mom and pop coffee shops, restaurants and bakeries to your neighborhood specialty boutique or traditional manufacturer.

Impact of the Retail Industry

According to the National Retail Federation (NRF), consumer spending accounts for 70 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) year-round, delivering a big boost to the U.S. economy. That’s why consumer motivations and behavior behind that spending are critically important at this time of year. Holiday sales account for 19 percent of annual retail industry sales, according to the NRF.

This year, NRF expects U.S. holiday retail sales to rise 3.6 percent, which is ahead of last year’s 3.2 percent increase and ahead of the seven-year average of 3.4 percent since our economy began to recover in 2009.

Impact of the Restaurant Industry

The National Restaurant Association reminds us this industry is also a huge component of the U.S. economy. In fact, the restaurant industry’s economic health is now a leading indicator of the nation’s economic health. NRF reports the industry’s annual sales are projected to reach \$783 billion by the end of 2016, which constitutes 4 percent of U.S. GDP. On a typical day, restaurant industry sales are \$1.8 billion across the 1 million restaurant locations nationwide, including restaurants located right around the corner in Southeast Texas. Today, the restaurant industry employs 14.4 million people.

Impact of Small Business Saturday

In 2015, 95 million consumers spent \$16.2 billion at local and main street merchants and restaurants on Small Business Saturday®. That’s an eight percent increase in the number of consumers, and a 14 percent increase in dollars spent over 2014. The average Small Business Saturday® shopper and/or diner spent \$170. Many consumers said Small Business Saturday® inspires them to continue to shop and dine small throughout the year and not just for the holidays. Many consumers said Small Business Saturday® inspires them to continue to shop and dine small throughout the year and not just for the holidays.

Among those who shopped on Small Business Saturday, 81 percent helped spread the word by encouraging family and friends.

You can do your part with these six simple steps:

1. If you're a business owner, make sure you're prepared for the holiday season by checking out helpful advice at <http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinesssaturday>.
2. If you're a customer, commit to making at least one purchase from a locally-owned small business retailer. Get to know the owner, and make your gift more meaningful by sharing their story as part of what you give your loved ones.
3. Also, after a day of shopping, you can continue to support small businesses by dining small at your favorite small business restaurant, coffee shop or watering hole.
4. Enjoy the experience. Travel outside your comfort zone -- and away from your computer screen -- to discover an out-of-the ordinary shopping district with some trendy local stores.
5. Join the conversation on social media, using the hashtag #SmallBizSat, #ShopSmall and #DineSmall to amplify your support. If you find a great small business retailer with unique products, Tweet or Facebook your find so others can enjoy it too.
6. When you open your gifts, start a conversation about which one came from the most distinctive and creative sellers. This can make for great debate over egg nog or your holiday drink of choice.

And remember that "shop small" refers to whom you buy from, and not how much you buy!