

POP-UPS

RETURN CONSUMERS

In the age of online shopping and one-day shipping, it is easy to choose convenience over authenticity. Despite this, many people prefer a tangible shopping experience in order to find one-of-a-kind wares instead of ones that are mass-produced. Luckily, we have savvy entrepreneurs to turn our demand for accessibility into the ideal consumer scenario with the concept of pop-ups. Pop-up markets and eateries have gained traction over the last few years because they deliver a communal experience. Their short duration keeps them fresh and revolving. What could be better than shopping a collection of handmade vendors or sampling craft food from multiple businesses at a single event?

Bill Zavola, owner of brick-and-mortar Ambeli Greek Taverna in Cranford and formerly of All Seasons Diner in Eatontown, sees value in the pop-up trend. He recognizes that changing times call for a pivot in marketing. Taste!-a pop-up eatery in Short Hills--gave Bill a cost-effective way of doing so. "[With Taste!], we met a lot of people who had never heard of us. They met some of our existing customers who came out to the event and started talking. At the end of the day, it was all about getting our name out there, something to draw [the customer] back," he explained.

Pop-ups give self-made brands

TO OUR SMALL, LOCAL ROOTS

exposure with minimal investment. The benefit is that small business owners can focus on their product while the pop-up organizer manages overhead costs, marketing, and logistics. The same can be said for pop-up craft markets. Carly Surmonte, better known as holistic health practitioner and craft-artisan, Car Chet Healing, says, "Pop-up markets have been vital to my foundation and growth. Not only are the [vendor] tables reasonably priced, but the events are advertised and marketed extremely well and set-up and break-down is always a breeze. In addition, they draw in such a wide audience that there are always great sales and connections with customers." Pop-ups attract a range of customers who may discover vendors they weren't previously aware of. They provide the small business owner or artisan the chance to make an invaluable face-to-face introduction and to leave a lasting impression. "[At] every event there are new people, which is excellent for networking. It has been through these pop-up markets that I have been able to meet new clients, increase traffic to my website, and obtain more followers on social media," she continues. The pop-up paradigm allows customers to sample goods or services before buying, stimulate word-of-mouth marketing, and (ideally) create repeat customer relationships.

I have witnessed the consumer-creator relationship take off through my business, Marketspace Vendor Events. In December 2017, we curated The Marketspace at Westfield, the first pop-up in Westfield history. Revitalizing a vacant storefront in Downtown Westfield, we hosted more than thirty vendors (including Surmonte) under one roof each market day. It was rewarding to give our craft artisans a new platform for showcasing their products and to see the expression of shoppers who struck

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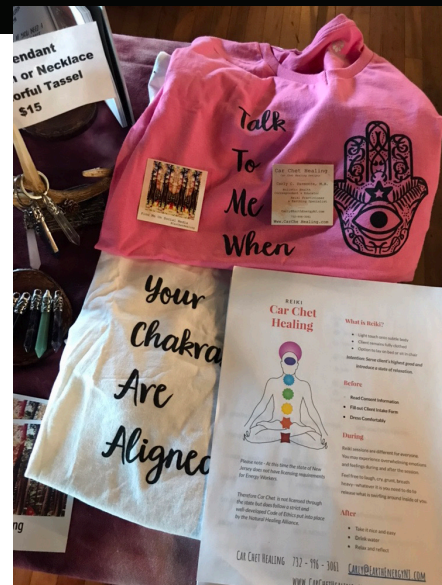




gold with so many unique treasures in one place. The market was successful for our vendors as well as the downtown shops and restaurants who saw increased sales those weekends, so much so, that we extended our market from two to three weekends. Locals, including my dentist, are still raving about their purchases and the talented artists they met a few weeks back!

Pop-ups offer a positive change to the existing retail landscape which has fallen by the wayside of online shopping. We no longer have to abandon our values for the sake of convenience. We can foster the pop-up experience into the new norm, carrying over the main principles of supporting small businesses, maintaining authenticity, and keeping things fresh.

“[Pop-ups] give customers and creators the opportunity to connect as individuals. You learn people’s names, ask them questions, learn their stories and understand the history behind your purchase. They [pop-ups] go beyond the transfer of money for goods and instead become the exchange of a true human experience. They give people the opportunity to know that their pen, wood carving, pillow, face scrub, or necklace was made and sold with love, passion, and pride. Pop-ups offer everything you could want to buy at the mall with the money going directly to an individual, not a corporation,” Surmonte exudes. The nature of pop-ups is to support small business conveniently. That’s something we can all stand behind!



SUPPLIED PHOTOS

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