

Go Green - Shop Irish, Sustainable Shopping.

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Lately we are becoming very aware of not only our own impact on the environment but also that of big brands. A fantastic way to help reduce our own carbon footprint and promote sustainability is to support Irish brands who put sustainability at the forefront of their businesses.

In December 2019, I visited Gifted at the RDS. This Contemporary Craft & Design Fair is the ultimate destination for anyone interested in craft, design, unique independent brands and artisan food producers. This year, I noticed there was a big emphasis on sustainability and more eco-friendly products available. Throughout the Fair visitors could look for the "Ask me my sustainable story" logo on stands. Where visitors found this logo they could ask the makers all about the sustainable credentials of their businesses.

In one section of the show, there was a Sustainability Pop-Up – a group of 12 carefully selected Irish brands, curated into an Eco Pop-Up Shop. This collection of Ireland's finest sustainable Irish ethical clothing, clean beauty and homewares was specially selected by Jo Linchan, Lifestyle Journalist, Co-Founder of Gaff Interiors and creator of The Futurist Podcast. I spoke to Jo –

1. Arran Street East

I was initially drawn to this stand by the beautiful colours and shapes of the pottery products. Arran Street East is a ceramics shop and studio in Dublin - Founded in 2014 by Creative Director, Laura Magahy, along with a team of designers and makers, to create simple, hand-thrown stoneware in unusual colours. Arran Street East's products are simple, useful, and refined. The fruit and vegetable markets inform the unique colour palette of the pots; pink grapefruit, lemon, pomegranate, cabbage, potato, and parsnip.



who had been given the mighty task of editing and curating this wonderful Eco-Corner. Jo chatted about her experience, "When the opportunity to edit the sustainable pop up at Gifted in the RDS in December 2019 came up, I knew I couldn't pass it up. I had spent the year educating myself about sustainable brands and processes in Ireland via my podcast series, The Futurist, and the pop-up seemed like the perfect opportunity to take that knowledge and insight and bring it to a public forum.

Gifted is a mammoth event with a loyal customer base and having those shoppers exposed to 12 of the most creative, pioneering and inspiring Irish companies was a no-brainer. Through my work as a journalist, highlighting these important companies is some of the work I'm most proud of. To be able to facilitate a sustainable village within one of Ireland's biggest events felt like the right leap to take".

With this in mind, I took an opportunity to visit some of the stands and find out more about how Irish brands are incorporating more sustainable products and everyday habits into their businesses. Here's a look at just some of the fantastic Irish brands we should all be following and supporting in 2020.



2. The Nature Of Things

The Nature of Things, based in the Chocolate Factory in Dublin has a strong sustainable ethic when it comes to the sourcing and packaging of their wonderfully scented diffusers and essential oils. As they say themselves "Sustainability is at the heart of everything we do". I chatted to owner, Benoit Nicol, a French native, about the holistic qualities of their essential oils and his knowledge of where to yield the best oil from aromatic plants, the best time to harvest, how to prepare for extraction, the art of distillation and how to define what is a quality natural oil. From a gift point of view, essential oils are a perfect option for someone with small children, who may not want an open flame candle but still wants their house to smell amazing!



3. Nunaia

Irish skincare range Nunaia has created a range of sustainable superfood skincare rituals designed to nourish your skin and renew your sense of balance and calm. From the planting and harvesting of raw materials, to product design and life-cycle, right through to a sustainable company culture, Nunaia are ticking all the right Eco-friendly boxes. Even their products are shipped in padded envelopes instead of boxes in order to minimise excess waste. I tried some of their Nourishing Radiance Serum, which glides onto the skin and absorbs really well – as well as smelling fantastic! I will definitely be incorporating this brand into my skincare routine for 2020.



4. Moon + Mellow

Moon + Mellow are a "slow fashion" Irish brand, creating luxury sleepwear – with huge emphasis on ethical production methods and natural and sustainable materials. Their first collection uses 100% sustainable cotton – soft, durable, breathable and hypoallergenic. From chatting to the staff at the Sustainability Pop-up, I got the distinct sense that both creativity and ethics are at the core of their beliefs for this business.

Fashion has such a huge impact on the environment and is, in fact, one of the leading causes of climate change – over 80 billion pieces of clothing are consumed each year! By supporting sustainable fashion brands such as Moon + Mellow, you're not only contributing to a small Irish business, you're purchasing a quality piece of clothing that will last for years. You're also consuming less!

5. Grown.ie

Another ethical clothing company that I came across at the show was Grown. They are the only clothing brand in Ireland to have to "1% for the Planet" Logo – dedicating a percentage of their profits towards the conservation of our planet. Grown will plant an indigenous Irish tree for each piece they sell at Gifted. To date they've planted over 4000 trees already! Grown.ie's range of men and women's shirts, tops and hoodies have been designed and styled in Ireland and put through a rigorous process of sustainable development auditing before being offered for sale. I actually received the gift of a tree for Christmas 2019 and absolutely love the idea! I think we all have so much stuff that we don't use or need – this would be a much better, sustainable and eco-friendly gift to give or receive in 2020.



6. Badly Made Books

Who doesn't love new stationery at the start of a year? I know I do! They say print is dead – but here we are, enjoying it right now. It's the unfortunate fact that paper comes from trees (which play a key role in maintaining a functioning environment)

so the guys at Badly Made Books specialise in using recycled paper to create beautifully made notebooks.

Their products are handmade with machines using a heat-free process and inks made from rice husks – highly sustainable all round. All of their products are slightly smaller than the A5/A4 sizes we're used to and this is done in order to minimise wasted paper. Any waste paper they do have, gets recycled locally and used as insulation in housing.



7 Jennifer Slattery

Jennifer Slattery creates timeless products such as napkins, table runners, shirts and scarfs – all made from Irish linen and lambswool. Each piece is made in Ireland and then hand-finished in Dublin. These items are designed to last – and there's something for everyone in this range. The lambswool scarf is woven in Donegal is so beautifully crafted that you just want to wrap yourself up in it from the moment you lay eyes on it. I also coveted the beautiful table linen and personalised napkin gift sets – now all I need is a table big enough! All their packaging is recyclable too and every element of the process has been sustainably sourced – a great bonus.

From an eco-friendly point of view – even the studio that Jennifer Slattery uses has been reclaimed and restored. An old boarded up building in Dublin was brought back to life. The shutters and boards that covered the windows were even repurposed into display shelves – a great idea.

So, instead of running around with scraps of paper in your bag with lots of little notes here and there – why not invest in a beautiful, thoughtfully made notebook – designed with our environment in mind. Who knows, it might spark a new wave of creativity in you!

With all the above in mind, we all know we need to look after our environment, our local businesses and our conscious at the same time. Irish brands are working really hard to make their products and methods more sustainable, ethical and affordable – we should sustain our title as "The Emerald Isle" and shop green, shop local and shop sustainable.

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