



Wheatsville Food Co-op is a small local grocery that has served Austin for 45 years. Its small size makes it an ideal option for safe grocery shopping during a pandemic. Photo by Samantha Powers.

Support Austin, not Amazon

Instead of putting money in Jeff Bezos' pocket, I'll show you how to shop local while staying safe

Since the pandemic started, it has become a regularity to see an Amazon truck parked somewhere on my street. Everywhere I look, Amazon packages adorn the doorsteps of neighbors who fear venturing into the city for their shopping needs. This predicament isn't uncommon, and I certainly understand people who feel that online shopping is the safest way. But what if I told you that your safe shopping doesn't have to put more money in Jeff Bezos' pocket? There are plenty of ways to stay safe while shopping local.

WHEATSVILLE FOOD CO-OP is a local grocery store that serves as a great alternative to Trader Joe's or HEB. I used to go there with my mom all the time and push my kid-sized cart down the aisle, and I am proud to say that as a more fully-grown shopper, Wheatsville is still a favorite of mine. It may lean a little healthy, but I encourage you to take a walk on the tofu-and-local-veggies side of life and see where it takes you! Open since 1976, Wheatsville knows Austin.

Family-owned for 75 years, **TOMLINSON'S FEED** is another local Austin staple. Tomlinson's has multiple convenient locations in Austin, including right across the street from Lamar Middle School. Mac students, ask your Lamar siblings to stop by after school and pick up some treats for your pet! It offers free curbside pickup and free same-day delivery for all orders, so customers can stay safe and support the local economy while shopping for their pet.

Team member Kate Knecht's family built Tomlinson's with the idea that it would last, and they were right.

"Four generations of my family have owned and operated Tomlinson's," Knecht said. "So my dad, my grandfather [and] my great-grandmother all worked. I think what we're building, what we want to build, is a business that provides lasting value. ... We've been here for 75 years; our goal is to be here for 75 more."

Tomlinson's offers free curbside pickup as well as free same-day delivery. They've been delivering since 2019, but things shifted when



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the pandemic hit.

Knecht said that when the pandemic hit, contrary to a lot of other businesses, Tomlinson's received an influx of sales in the midst of shortages at big businesses.

"I believe it was the weekend of March 14," Knecht said. "Things really started to heat up that weekend, and everybody was kind of panic-buying—one thing that we didn't expect was [that] we had a lot of people coming into our stores for the very first time saying, 'Look, I normally get my stuff from Chewy, or normally I get my stuff from HEB, and they're totally out, or they can't ship to me for another three weeks, so what do you got?' And we were able to serve those customers."

For all you dads out there, **BREED AND COMPANY** can help with all of your hardware needs. Forget huge fluorescent-lit corporations like Home Depot, Breed and Company is family-owned and can supply you with anything you need. My dad can attest to that.

"We are forever grateful to the huge outpouring of folks who continue to shop [with] us during this pandemic," Mahin Barker, president of Breed and Company, wrote in an email. "Our business is strong and resilient due to the community's outstanding patronage."

END OF AN EAR records is more of a niche company. In the digital age, buying records is less of a necessity and more of a special treat. But when in Austin, do as Austinites do, right? End of an Ear offers curbside pickup and mail order, and their online library is very extensive, especially for a local store.

Owner Dan Plunkett is the embodiment of old Austin.



Tomlinson's is a family-owned Austin business that has been around for 75 years. Kate Knecht says that her family business will be around for 75 more, and that starts with adapting to serving customers during a pandemic. "I think what we're building, what we want to build, is a business that provides lasting value," Knecht said. Photo by Samantha Powers.

"I moved here in 1981—loved the city since I first moved here—the people, the climate, and just the surrounding area," Plunkett said. "I always loved record stores since I was a kid, and I just naturally fell into it somehow."

End of an Ear has thrown itself into the safest possible methods for shopping during a pandemic, including limited appointments, curbside pickup and mail-order delivery.

Plunkett explained that the business is for the customers and by the customers, and he appreciates their continued support.

"We have had great support from our

customers who have continued to shop our webstore, Instagram or just emailing about items," Plunkett said. "We just take it week by week. Our business has pivoted to face the challenges of how to have folks remain safe while still being able to enjoy buying records to enjoy at home."

So next time you're in need of a shopping spree, whether it be for some last-minute pet food, the perfect-sized washer to fit with some screws you have laying around, or an indulgent record-shopping haul, skip that Amazon "add to cart" button and shop local instead.