

Is grocery packaging necessary? Not for these shops

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Katerina Bogatireva founded Precycle, a zero-waste, package-free grocery store in the Bushwick neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York in 2018. Photo by: Ann Hermes/Christian Science Monitor

Precycle is a new grocery store in Brooklyn, New York. Katerina Bogatireva started it.

Shoppers can buy fruits and vegetables. They can get pastas and flour. However, these do not have usual plastic packaging on them. You bring your own containers from home to the store.

Her store is part of a bigger trend. Some other businesses are thinking about how to reduce waste.

Caring For The Environment

Bogatireva got the idea from her son. At school, he had learned about helping the environment.

She says, "He was very concerned. And he said, 'Mummy, do you know how long plastic will remain in the landfill?' And that sort of broke my heart."

That moment gave her the idea. Her Precycle business opened in December 2018.

Precycle is not the only packaging-free business. There is also Zero market in Colorado. Package Free Shop is also in Brooklyn. Large companies are starting to take notice, too.

Starbucks plans to ditch plastic straws. Nestlé promised to make its packaging entirely recyclable or reusable.

Consumers Embrace Recycling

Many people are celebrating recycling. Others want to reduce the use of single-use items such as bags, forks, spoons and containers.

Companies like Precycle may catch on. If so, it will show that people really have changed their values about plastic packaging, says Thomas Kinnaman. He works at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania. Kinnaman studies how businesses and jobs affect the environment.

Plastic packaging can make life easier. Grocery store foods arrive wrapped in plastic. It is lightweight. Plastic grocery bags are easily available. Plastic also helps keep meals from spoiling.

Avoiding packaging can be tough, Bogatireva says. Before, she had to shop at different stores to find items without plastic. She wanted to make it easier for customers to choose package-free groceries. That is why she opened her store.

Customers bring their own containers to Precycle. They can also buy reusable ones there. People are accepting this, says Bogatireva.

Less Packaging, More Creativity

Packaging can make food last much longer, says Susan Selke. She helps lead the School of Packaging at Michigan State University.

In the past, you would buy crackers from a barrel, she says. Now, we have "prepackaged crackers." These "stay fresh and crispy for a lot longer," Selke says. We could get rid of packaged crackers. However, society would have to make huge changes, she adds.

That is a limitation for Precycle, says Bogatireva. So, the store mostly carries ingredients. It has fewer pre-made foods. They do not sell meat or fish.

She has had to get creative. Her customers wanted cheese, so she found cheese wrapped in wax. She gave them an idea. They could reuse the wax to make a candle.

Quiz

1 What is the big issue that the grocery stores in the article are trying to address?

- (A) Packaging is made of plastic.
- (B) Packaging gets thrown away in landfills.
- (C) Food consumption contributes to pollution.
- (D) Much of the food bought at stores goes to waste.

2 Finish the sentence below.

One MAIN idea of the article is that:

- (A) People can reuse the wax that has been wrapped around cheese.
- (B) Shoppers used to buy their crackers from a barrel.
- (C) Plastic is often used in bags and food containers.
- (D) Some grocery stores have stopped selling products that are packaged.

3 Customers at these types of grocery stores bring their own containers.

How does this solution help solve the waste problem?

- (A) The food can be stored longer in containers.
- (B) The stores do not need to have small packages of food.
- (C) The food stays fresh when it is ordered in large quantities.
- (D) The packaging does less damage when you open it at the store.

4 Read the paragraph from the section "Consumers Embrace Recycling."

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What is the MAIN idea of this paragraph?

- (A) Few stores sell products without packaging.
- (B) Bogatireva used to buy foods wrapped in plastic.
- (C) Some shoppers like to visit several different stores.
- (D) Bogatireva thinks plastic can make life easier.

5 Besides recycling, what is one way the article mentions people can reduce pollution from things like plastic?

- (A) Use less single-use items.
- (B) Use reusable grocery bags.
- (C) Reuse glass and plastic containers.
- (D) Don't put recyclable items in the garbage.

- 6 Which section from the article gives information about how Bogatireva got the idea for starting a grocery store that does not use packaging?
- (A) introduction [paragraphs 1-3]
 - (B) "Caring For the Environment"
 - (C) "Consumers Embrace Recycling"
 - (D) "Less Packaging, More Creativity"
- 7 What is one specific way that the shop owner in the article suggests reusing products?
- (A) people using their own containers
 - (B) putting cardboard into the recycling bin
 - (C) melting down wax from cheese to make candles
 - (D) using paper wrapping from products to wrap gifts.
- 8 What information will the reader find in the section "Consumers Embrace Recycling"?
- (A) the reasons why stores use plastic packaging
 - (B) the reasons why Bogatireva does not sell meat or fish
 - (C) the names of large packaging-free businesses
 - (D) the year that the Precycle grocery store opened