

Seeds, stationery and spas: the unusual goods selling out in the shutdown

Shoppers are splashing out to make the shutdown more tolerable

By
Sam Benstead

31 March 2020 • 6:00am

Premium

The national shutdown has created a very visible and predictable rush for essential items – from toilet paper to canned food. Elsewhere demand has surged for unusual items to make home life more comfortable, entertaining, and meaningful.

Retailer John Lewis said demand for pasta makers has risen by five fold since the country's lockdown began in earnest. Shoppers have looked to reduce their dependence on supermarket shelves by turning flour and eggs into lasagna sheets, rather than struggling to source them outside.

Calligraphy pens, cards and stationery are also in demand as workers go back to basics and write letters to family and friends, while sales of luxury loungewear, such as slippers and pajamas, has soared.

However, it isn't just comfort and hobbies high-end consumers are seeking. Garden centre Squires found that customers were flocking to its vegetable and fruit seed and compost sections, in order to grow their own produce. More time for gardening, alongside shortages at supermarkets and restrictions on movement have raised interest in self-sufficiency.

Jigsaws are also selling out fast on Amazon. Best-selling puzzles of children's favourite The Gruffalo, the solar system, and London landmarks are out of stock. But it's not too late to snap up jigsaws of English village or home scenes, the company said.

They have proved a hit with kids and adults and are seeing a resurgence. John Lewis also reported that board games Monopoly and Pictionary had also been extremely popular among shoppers.

People are also splashing out on high-end dining, even if they cannot go to restaurants. Michelin star chefs are getting big orders for takeaways, including Mayfair-based Chinese restaurant Hakkasan, which is offering set menus for two at £135.

More luxurious still, Quintessentially Estates noticed a surge in gym and spa installations in high-end London homes since the lockdown began.