



It's Not Marketing. These 18 Products Are Truly Limited Editions

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(Bloomberg Businessweek) -- A McDonald's sandwich and an Hermès handbag may sound like improbable counterparts, but the appeal of both arises from the same impulse: scarcity. That [five-figure status purse](#) is so hard to buy it's supposedly sold only to those willing to join a waiting list; likewise, the McRib appears for a short time each fall, as if out of nowhere, sparking a frenzy among fans who resort to using an online locator to find the nearest supply.

It's not about "good taste," either: The appeal is an instinct hardwired into the human brain. "As things are unavailable, we've learned we need to fight harder to get them," says Kelly Goldsmith, a behavioral scientist and associate professor of marketing at Vanderbilt University whose research focuses on scarcity. "Whether that's bison meat when we were cave people or A grades at school when you're marked on a curve."

Americans, who are more acquainted with abundance, are especially susceptible. Think of supermarkets bursting with 100,000 different products or the one-click, two-day time frame it takes to have anything we want shipped straight to our home. In our brain, a lack of something triggers a stronger reaction than too much.



Scarcity marketing is more common in the luxury sector than anywhere else. Scoring a hard-to-find sneaker is more than a purchase—it’s an ego-boosting success, Goldsmith says. “You’re not only showing the rest of the world how special you are,” she says. “You’re showing yourself that, too.”

Economic uncertainty is likely to further burnish the appeal of products that seem scarce, according to research by Eesha Sharma, an associate professor at Dartmouth College’s Tuck School of Business. Thanks to the instinct dubbed compensatory consumption, she says, “if you feel like you have fewer financial resources than other people, you offset the perceived deficit by acquiring things that are unavailable to others.”

Unlike the supply of the McRib and the Birkin, which are artificially throttled, some products do exist in truly finite quantities. They might be limited because of their rarity, such as a bottle of Benedictine rescued from a sunken ship. Others require a complex manufacturing process that cannot be replicated over and over. We’ve scoured the world for 26 of them to get while you can.

Style



SCOTT FRASER SHIRTS

The British menswear designer has a personal obsession with Italian-American knitwear from the 1950s through the 1970s and estimates that he has at least 200 pieces in his closet. Fraser used those classics as starting point for a Talented Mr. Ripley-inspired collection, which is produced outside Milan by a team of four people. Each merino wool piece takes about five weeks to finish. £310 (\$400); scottfrasercollection.com

CHRISTY DAWN DRESSES

The design team at Christy Dawn in Los Angeles relies on dead stock fabric supplier Ragfinders of California for as much as 98% of its raw materials, says Chief Executive Officer Aras Baskauskas. Bolts as short as 3 yards go toward producing one-off designs and limited runs. The origins of this approach are practical: As a startup, it couldn't afford the minimums that most textile manufacturers mandate, and it's since become a signature of the brand. From \$198; christydawn.com

GOLD & WOOD EYEPIECES

Ten craftspeople work in the Luxembourg atelier of this ultraluxe optician, and it can take as many as three days to produce a single pair of glasses. Collections include one called Supersonic, which incorporates shards of the wing of a decommissioned Concorde into the the design. Another, Copa, comes with 23-karat gold leaf laid by craftsmen in Versailles who

use fiercely guarded, proprietary techniques. From €2,014 (\$2,349) per pair; gold-and-wood.com

DARA LAMB WOMENSWEAR

Bespoke women's tailor Lamb relies on vintage fabrics dating to the '80s and '90s for many of her designs. Her fine silks, tweeds, and woolens are often from small European mills no longer in existence, using techniques that digital printing and modern looms have rendered outmoded. The silk prints, for instance, were screened on long tables with hand-mixed inks. Lamb typically only has enough scraps of these fabrics to make three unique garments at most. Handmade jackets from \$3,650, silk print blouses from \$995; daralamb.com

Home



WOLF WHISKERS BRUSHES

Peter Wolf is a U.S. Navy vet turned artisan who now fashions handmade wooden shaving brushes in his studio in Hampton Roads, Va. Wolf works only with the finest materials, including High Mountain White badger hair for the bristles. Because he hand-turns each on a lathe, production is limited to no more than 40 such brushes each month. He offers two dozen or so standard handles but also accepts custom commissions. From \$78; wolfwhiskers.com

ACHILLE SALVAGNI GLASSWARE

Italian interior designer Salvagni stumbled on a centuries-old haul of unused pigments from the same Murano factory that design legends Napoleone Martinuzzi and Tomaso Buzzi once used. Although these archival colors often incorporated now-outlawed chemicals, Salvagni persuaded glass blowers to use them in a collection of vessels whose shades are impossible to replicate. From \$8,700; achillesalvagni.com

LUIGI BEVILACQUA CESELLATO VELVET

Venice was once the world's velvet-making hub, where more than 1,000 weavers specialized in the plush fabric. Today only a handful remain, including this producer who specializes in soprarizzo velvet, which combines cut and uncut pile to maximize softness and texture. Using original 18th century looms, the material is produced through such a painstaking process that no more than 12 inches in length is made daily. Price on request; luigi-bevilacqua.com

HYDROWOOD FURNITURE

When Tasmania's Pieman River was dammed in 1986 to generate hydroelectricity, nearby forests were flooded and the timbers there submerged. An entrepreneur has begun retrieving the preserved logs from the depths, dubbing the virgin trunks "hydrowood." An estimated five years' worth of wood is available for salvage. Such prized finds have been used by local furniture maker Simon Ancher in one-off pieces. Custom couch from \$10,000; simonancherstudio.com.au

UXUA RETALHO LAMP Erstwhile Diesel creative director Wilbert Das ditched fashion to operate a boutique hotel in Trancoso, Brazil, where he's returned to design. His Rural Modern furniture collection uses only material sourced from within a 5-mile radius; the Retalho lamp shade is made solely from dead stock fabrics, mostly antique linen, and takes a month to complete. He's made eight to order so far. \$8

Food



CARTER CUTLERY As a karate-obsessed teen, Murray Carter stumbled on his future profession on a trip to Japan. While there he met 16th generation bladesmith Sensei Yasuyuki Sakemoto, whose family specialized in forging samurai swords. Carter spent six years apprenticing with him before returning to the U.S. to open his workshop, where he and his team turn out a limited number of hand-forged, laminated steel knives each year. From \$180; cartercutlery.com

BONA FURTUNA RISERVA DI NONNA ROSA OLIVE OIL

Seagate Technology LLC Chairman Steve Luczo bought a patch of land in Corleone, Italy, in memory of his grandmother Rose, who once tended the olive trees there. Those groves now produce gourmet extra virgin olive oil, his passion project. The most rarefied edition is drawn from only nine trees, some of which are 1,500 years old. \$150; bonafurtuna.com

TRESCO HONEY

Once a year, Andrew Lawson harvests honey from the hives of the botanical garden on Treco, in the Isles of Scilly, off England's Cornish coast. Thanks to Galapagos-like weather patterns protecting them from incursions of disease that now blight most colonies, these bees offer the ultimate organic honey treat. Lawson doesn't sell the results commercially; he posts an alert on the garden's social media account when a few jars are available. First come, first served. £7 per jar; tresco.co.uk

BIZZARIA ORANGE The origins of this aptly named citrus fruit date to the Medici-fueled Renaissance heyday of Florence, when botanical experiments were commonplace. Bizzaria is a graft chimera in which the cells of the rootstock and cultivar end up blending, so the resulting plant displays traits of both parents—in this case, a Florentine citron and a sour orange. Once thought lost, it was rediscovered by gardener Paolo Galeotti in 1980 and is propagated in limited numbers for sale. A mere 100 plants are available for purchase each year. From €35 per plant; oscartintori.it

POMPONA VANILLA

Four foragers. Three hours. One bee. The pompona vanilla pod is harvested by a tiny group that wades into the Peruvian Amazon to hunt down a wild-flowering alternative to the standard vanilla plant. Humans hand-pollinate most of the pompona pods, but the aptly named endangered dilemma bee does it naturally. It's the only insect able to help the mythical plant, as it lands on the flowers when they open for three hours once a year. The resulting pods are five times larger than a standard beans and have a distinctive smoky, leathery aroma. The entire annual harvest maxes out at a couple of hundred pods. About \$25 per pod; burlapandbarrel.com

Drink



COGNAC FRAPIN 750 Founded in 1270, Cognac Frapin marks its 750th anniversary this year by introducing a made-to-order blend relying entirely on liquid drawn from barrels that date to the 19th century. Limited to 21 bottles, one for each generation of the family, this blend is packaged in a Baccarat decanter and a wooden box, complete with a key to lock it away from thirsty guests. \$50,000 per bottle; cognac-frapin.com

ZWACK UNICUM RISERVA

The standard edition of Zwack is a staple herbal liqueur in Hungarian bars, made by the namesake family since 1790. A new limited-edition riserva is a pet project of the latest generation to steer the distillery, siblings Izabella and Sándor. They take ordinary unicum and age it not once but twice before adding some Tokaji wine from the cellars of Izabella's own winery. Both bitter and fruity, the result is a whiskeylike after-dinner drink. Only 13,000 bottles are made each year. About \$30; zwackwebshop.hu

BOLLINGER VIEILLES VIGNES

In the late 19th century, phylloxera aphids ravaged the vineyards of the Old World. There were a few exceptions, though: Small patches of land proved resistant to the blight for reasons that remain unclear even now. One of them was on the Bollinger estates in Champagne, where the vines still produce limited-edition cuvées, known as vieilles vignes ("old vines"). About 2,000 bottles are produced at a time, but only in exceptional years. \$1,050; vintus.com

OCEANX BENEDICTINE

Last year, OceanX recovered a stash of rare De Haartman & Co. Benedictine liqueur, originally intended for the czar of Russia, from the 1917 shipwreck S.S. Kyros. The salvage company has started selling a handful of the 900 or so bottles to ordinary buyers. A selection of cognac found in the same wreck is also available. From \$7,000 per bottle; oceanxteam.com

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