



When everything shut down in Maryland, my friends and family were very concerned about the future of our diverse local businesses. One of the things that makes our little city special is the way it supports and embraces great food, local boutiques, practicing artists, and many distilleries and breweries. We were not sure how the people and businesses we cared about were going to survive.

This was also during the period of what many have called “sanitation theater.” Everyone washed their hands until they were dry and cracked. Shortages of hand sanitizer made the headlines. I was particularly uncomfortable using those sticky, chemical-laden, name brand sanitizers anyway. In the middle of all this, my husband discovered that our favorite distillery was making hand sanitizer to donate to local hospitals and to sell to loyal customers. He came home after work with something like 5 or 6 giant bottles, which he used to fill tiny blue spray bottles.

Almost a year and a half later I am still using that sanitizer. I keep it in my bag, in the car, and in my house. It looks and sprays like water and smells a bit like vodka. Every time I spray it on my hands I feel both unsettled and relieved. Like so many other people, I spent a year and a half completely fearful of everyone and everything. The familiar odor of distillery hand sanitizer reminded me to breathe, to let go of the tiniest amount of my dread, and to keep faith in my community.