

Guilty Greenie: Bonus Episode Valentine's or Valencrime?

Cait: Hello and welcome to Guilty Greenie. We are your imperfect hosts. I'm Cait Bagby.

Sarah: And I'm Sarah Ferris.

Cait: And Sarah, this is a, what are we calling it? Special episode? Bonus episode? It is a bonus episode for a special day.

Sarah: It is, I think a bonus episode. Go the bonus.

Cait: All right. Well, we're doing. Bonus for a special day. We've decided to tackle Valentine's Day because, well, we're just hopeless. Romantics .

Sarah: Well, I am one, one half of my partnership is romantic. The other one has got that bone completely missing.

Cait: Um, are you, are you a romantic?

Sarah: Oh, actually, probably. I'm not, to be fair, I'm pretty crap as well.

We are doing this episode in between seasons. Do stay tuned because we've got season two already in production and follow us on social media so that you can see when it's gonna drop, and then just enjoy this lovely bonus episode on Valentine's Day.

Cait: It's one of the questions we get asked the most, which is the holidays, like how to be more sustainable. Can you be more sustainable at Christmas, Valentine's Day, Halloween, whatever it is. Yeah.

Sarah: Typically when there's gift giving involved. I think you worry. That you are going to not buy something nice for someone. You feel that obligation to spend money to do it. Yeah. And Valentine's in particular, there's a couple of areas that you do normally see people give gifts and that's the chocolates, the jewelry, the cards, and the flowers, which I think we are gonna tackle today.

Cait: Yeah.

Sarah: But what's your experience with Valentine's Day? Because I have to tell you, it's a very much a American holiday.

Cait: No, it's actually celebrated pretty globally.

Sarah: It is now, but it didn't used to be in New Zealand. Like Valentine's Day was not a thing. Halloween was not a thing but since, you know, the kids have realized they can get free candy on Halloween, so everybody's got their hands up for that. And I think possibly the same's happened with Valentine's Day. It's kind of just become this commercial holiday that we've, we've adopted.

Cait: Yeah, it didn't start off that way. I, I'm not gonna go into the history of Valentine's Day because it goes back way, way back.

Sarah: Um, well, it's St. Valentine's, isn't it? Is it?

Cait: Suppo? Oh god. Sarah, I just said I wasn't gonna go into this.

Sarah: Oh, sorry. Stop. Stop. This is not a history podcast, but I, I assumed it was St. Valentine's.

Cait: It did start, uh, during the Roman rule and it's, there is a bit of debate over which Valentine it was, there was two possible Valentine, uh, Who, who actually and why. And over the years it changed and...

Sarah: well, you knew so much more than I thought you were gonna know then . That was quite impressive. So well done.

Cait: Listen, it's um, oh, the episode hasn't come out yet, so this reference, I don't know will make sense. But I will say that my email inbox is a lot more pleasant than the first episode of season two, which is about condoms. So I'm getting much more pleasant emails this time around.

It is Celebrated around the world. To what extent? It varies and different countries put importance on different aspects of it. There was 28 countries that were surveyed for one, yeah, one survey. They were surveyed for one survey and, um,

Sarah: How they work. Yeah.

Cait: 55% of adults who had a partner said they were likely to do something special for the occasion. Now, 68% of those individuals were 35 and under. So if you're under 35, you are more likely to do something.

Sarah: I wonder though if that is because it's quite a new phenomenon and the younger people have taken on board. I don't know. And outside of America, cuz you guys, it's been there forever for you. Yeah. It's not really a thing over here either in the UK in the same way. Like you might have Valentine's Day, but it's not like say massive.

Cait: Oh yeah. I think. The way I look at it, you're right, it is very big here. It's been big since I can remember, but the way I look at it is you just get really tired of your partner and so it just becomes another day and you're just like, Hey, happy Valentine's Day.

Sarah: Yeah.

Cait: It's, I think, yeah, I'll, I'll say it this way. I think you become comfortable in your love and don't need to externally show that.

Sarah: Yes, that's true. I have no desire to demonstrate it at all.

Cait: Past couple years, we haven't done anything. Bobby used to get me flowers. Doesn't really do that anymore. Uh, which is fine. There's no judgment there. Now, I think now if we do anything, we'll make pasta from scratch and we'll, we'll just kind of a nice dinner.

Sarah: Oh, that sounds delightful. I might come and crash your Valentine's. It sounds more exciting than mine. I don't think we've ever done anything or exchanged any gifts or even a card. Ever. Even back in the day.

Cait: Really?

Sarah: There you go.

Cait: Yeah. But I guess no and fine. Its not big.

Sarah: Yeah, no, uh, true. And any excuse not to have to think of that. But the other thing I was gonna say, the only time I ever remembered getting a Valentine's card was my mom, I must have been about 17 and I didn't have a boyfriend at the time, or, and she gave us all Valentine's cards cuz we were all

single, all six of us. I mean, obviously the little kids. My younger brothers singles is the younger, but it was just really sweet.

Cait: Do you want another fun survey? Oh yeah. So another survey that asked 1500 respondents, 59% said they were planning to give their partner a gift and 85 percent of parents said they planned on giving their child something.

Sarah: Oh, that's so cute.

Cait: Yeah, so it's it's actually even, oh, that's nice. In the US I don't know if it's that way. Like you get cards from your parents or flowers when you're younger or candy. Yeah, that's.

Sarah: Oh, that's really sweet. No, that's not a thing. I mean, mum was obviously ahead of her time.

Cait: Also, 27% of respondents give their pets something.

Sarah: Okay. That's just, well, it's probably more likely in my house, but, uh, still . And I would love to know, and I'm sure you don't have the stat, but I wonder how many babies are born nine months later. What month is that?

Cait: You know, I saw something the other day, and I don't know how true this is, the month that most people are born in is September, so

Sarah: I think that's it, isn't it? Hold on. February, March, April, may, June, July, August, September, October.

Cait: No.

Sarah: October. It's nine. Yeah. Touch and go. Touch and go. You can go either side there.

Cait: They're celebrating early.

Sarah: Yeah.

Cait: As you're saying that I just had an aha moment. So when I was doing this research, one of the things that came up as like the top gifts, because Valentine's Day you're giving cards, you're like you said, chocolate, um, gifts, jewelries up there. But one of the things that was up there was clothing and I just kind of

ignored that. Cause I'm like, who gifts someone clothing on Valentine's Day? And as you're saying, like, I wonder how many babies are born. I'm like, ah, is lingerie clothing?

Sarah: Yes, of course. That would be a very Valentine's gift, isn't it?

Cait: You can tell how romantic my husband and I are that I don't even think that that's something you would give

Sarah: Is lingerie clothing? Is this gray granny pants set with the skin colored scaffolding at the top?

Cait: Listen, when we've been together, Uh, 17 years, I think. 16, 17 years. And at this point it's like either you get the granny panties or you get nothing. So like literally I'm not..

Sarah: He's probably wanting the nothing.

Cait: Yeah, exactly. Like I feel no need to spend money on

Sarah: anyway. All right, well that's enough TMI.

Cait: Yeah. Now that people know way too much about our approach, undies. Yeah. Approach to lingerie. All right. So I am gonna give you some American numbers because as you said, we, um, Celebrate it a lot and we spend a lot, so,

Sarah: okay. Buckle up.

Cait: In 2020. Dun dun, dun Americans spent around 27 billion dollars on Valentine's Day gifts.

Sarah: Twenty-seven billion dollars. Yeah. Wowsers. That's keeping the economy going.

Cait: It went down to 21 billion in 2021. Uh, wow. And people are thinking it was because of Covid and people

Sarah: The C word.

Cait: Were they were in the house together, stuck in the house together, for so long that they didn't wanna celebrate.

Sarah: Oh my god. That's funny. But probably the opposite as well, is that people weren't able to date, so you weren't actually wooing anybody.

Cait: Yes. Good call.

Sarah: Maybe, I don't know.

Cait: My beige granny panties weren't doing any wooing, that's for sure.

Sarah: They were whoa-ing not wooing.

Cait: Um, so of that 27 billion broken down, roughly about 5.8 billion is spent on jewelry.

Sarah: That's some bling.

Cait: Yeah, it's the largest expenditure. The second biggest expenditure was an evening out at \$4.3 billion.

Sarah: Mm-hmm. So lovely way to spend an evening with your loved one like that.

Cait: Wining and dining. And then the others are around 2.4 billion on candy. 2.3 billion on flowers and clothing is in there, but I don't have the number for how much people spent on clothing. I don't know if that also includes cards. Like is a card a gift?

Sarah: No, it's not a gift.

Cait: Wow. No strong opinions on that one.

Sarah: It's like a letter, isn't it? Do you class a gletter... Letter as a gift.

Cait: A gletter as a gift?

Sarah: Gletter...

Cait: This is where I'm a bit torn because if my husband does give me a card, he like makes it and then he has this little like pet friendly paint that he dips the dog's feet in their paw prints and I'll put them on the card and like sign their names. So to me that's a gift. It's so corny.

Sarah: That is a gift.

Cait: Love it.

Sarah: Okay, so, well, I didn't know you were gonna pull out of the bag, this 3D handcrafted swan popping out in some origami situation that Bobby's made you. No, that's clearly a gift, but I think a store bought card is, no.

Cait: It's, it's a, is it a check the box? It's a check the box.

Sarah: It is a check the box. But also, not to sniff at that, but the cards themselves are obviously made of paper. How many trees are killed in the making of Valentine's?

Cait: You wanna start there? Well, should we start with the non-G gift? Cards.

Sarah: Yes, let's do that. I'm incensed about it.

Cait: I just wanna say though, cards are super expensive too. I don't understand why they're so expensive. I mean, I do, but

Sarah: No, I don't either.

Cait: I don't like, honestly, get a piece of 8 by 10 paper folded in half. Sign it. We're good. I'm happy.

Sarah: Or if you're bobby, was it up into something special? or the alternate to that is you can do what my husband does and just get A4 piece of paper for any anniversary and just write to Sarah, from Gareth on it. That's it. Just in pen. Nothing in between. Not even love. I mean, that makes my social media every freaking year we have our anniversary. Okay.

Cait: I love it. We don't even do anything for our anniversary. God, I'm, we're sounding.

Sarah: I don't, do you count that is doing something for your anniversary, an A4 piece of paper?

Cait: Listen, there was, there was a lot of labor that went into getting that piece of paper, finding a pen.

Sarah: True.

Cait: It counts.

Sarah: Mm. Well, it's one more than I was giving him, so he didn't even get an A4 sheet from me.

Cait: That's because you're being eco-friendly, so you're just saying it instead of using the paper.

Sarah: Exactly. And if you can all remember that going forward, all my family and friends, when you don't get any gifts or cards from me, it's not that I don't care, it's just that I'm giving you my love with words, which is far more eco-friendly.

Cait: Way more

Sarah: Tick.

Cait: Look how green you've become.

Sarah: I know.

Cait: All right. Well, cards, uh, card exchanging, really end letters. We'll say. Cards and letters. Uh, started ex

Sarah: or gletters, as I like to call them.

Cait: Yeah. . Uh, they were started to really be exchanged during the 17th century, but it wasn't until the 1840s that the first valentine's Day cards were mass produced and they were sold by a woman called Esther Howland, and she is considered the mother of American Valentine's.

Sarah: Oh, and you said you didn't know the history. Oh, you weren't gonna go into the history.

Cait: I'm not going into like

Sarah: the quite historical.

Cait: All right, fine. I'll go back to now, I'll go back to numbers if you want that. No problem.

Sarah: History every time for me. Thanks.

Cait: All right, though. Americans do send around 145 million Valentine's Day cards, but that does not include, and I'm curious if they do this in the UK, that does not include children's classroom card exchanges.

Sarah: Are you curious whether they do Valentine's in the classroom? No, I'm pretty sure they've never done that. Here they do it. I'm trying to think. There was one time, but I think it was a Christmas card class exchange, not Valentine's.

Cait: Mm-hmm. So how I remember it from growing up and I think it's pretty similar depending on where you are is every student had like a little pocket thing that was like taped up on the front wall or on the chalkboard or whatever, and every student put a Valentine's Day card into every other person's. So if you had 20 kids in your classroom, you would buy 20 cards. So you would end up with 20 cards. 145 million Valentine's Day cards, not including classroom exchange, which is, that's insane.

Sarah: Mind blowing then.

Cait: Yeah, it's a lot. And I'm sure you can guess that it's gonna go to deforestation.

Sarah: Uh, well, I mean, there's only one way that can go unless you keep giving the card back. Can I just take that card back that I gave you, Terry, for this year? I'm gonna put it in your little envelope next year as well.

Cait: You've been talking to my mother. I know it.

Sarah: Oh, does she do that? That's really funny.

Cait: No, she does it with the Christmas bows though, and like ribbon and stuff.

Sarah: Um, you'd be so proud of me. Can we segue a little bit?

Cait: Yeah. Yeah.

Sarah: To Christmas paper?

Cait: Yeah. I mean, it's come and gone, so we can go back to that.

Sarah: I know, but you would've been proud of me last Christmas. The Christmas we've just had, because I did all my Christmas wrapping only in material. Right back to the very beginning of season.

Cait: That's incredible.

Anyway moving on.

That's incredible. I know. I, we weren't doing highs and lows, so way to, just like..

Sarah: Braggity, brag.

Cait: All right. Well seeing as you're not contributing to deforestation this year. So the World Wildlife Foundation, tested some Valentine's Day cards that were sold in the UK and those cards contained a mix of rare tropical woods that mostly came from Southeast Asia. Now, this was a limited test. I'm not saying that all cards contain this, but obviously we know it's better to get post-consumer waste recycled, all that kind of stuff. Anyways, in Southeast Asia, that is an area that has one of the highest rates of deforestation and it's very much negatively affecting indigenous species such as the cloud leopard, the orangutang, the sumatran tiger, and also indigenous communities.

So,

Sarah: okay. Little note, people only used recycled cards, is that right?

Cait: Well, so I have some tips on all of these. Um, how you can, if you are going to do a card and not just an A4 piece of paper like Gareth does. Um,

Sarah: yeah.

Cait: So yeah, look for cards that are made from a hundred percent. recycled materials, avoid cards with any kind of glitter or foil or plastic, right? Same as wrapping paper because you can't recycle them.

Sarah: Yes. Mm-hmm.

Cait: Um, the other thing you can do is look for a certification including the Forest Stewardship Council, so the FSC, and that will essentially authenticate that it's sustainably harvested. Now in the EU there is something called the EU timber Regulation that is not applicable to greeting cards. So if you're accustomed to looking for that regulation, it does not apply to greeting cards. So you're better off looking for FSC.

Sarah: Good tips. Mm-hmm. right? Well, we've solved that problem. You know, the good thing about that is it's one of these topics that we've hit on that I don't feel guilty about. I don't do that. I don't have Valentine's cards.

Cait: Out of pure lazy, I don't either.

Sarah: one less, two less things to feel guilty about.

Okay, so then jewelry. Yeah, because we all have a little bit of bling.

Cait: Mm.

Sarah: What's bad about the jewelry? I'm sure there's plenty, but

Cait: Yeah, of course there's plenty. I'm gonna focus on diamond and when we come to flowers, I'm also gonna focus on like roses.

Sarah: They're what you would expect with Valentine's.

Cait: Exactly. We'll, we'll start off with history. Um,

Sarah: let's do it.

Cait: So have you heard of the De Beers Company?

Sarah: Yes, I have. The DeBeers Diamonds? Yes. Mm-hmm. .

Cait: So in 1938, the De Beers company hired a advertising agency to create a slogan to help sell their diamonds. The heart of that was they wanted Americans to feel a internal like psychological motivation to purchase the diamonds and the slogan they come up with is the greater the diamond, the greater the expression of love.

Sarah: Mm-hmm.

Cait: So the bigger the diamond... it is fading a little bit. But we still see this with engagement rings. Like there's so much emphasis on like, oh,

Sarah: the bigger, yeah.

Cait: Yeah. The bigger, oh the more they must love you. Don't buy into that, don't buy into that.

Sarah: No.

Cait: Um, in 1999, a Diamond is forever, which is another slogan of theirs was ranked the top slogan of the 20th century. So it just goes to show you

Sarah: really?

Cait: Yeah.

Sarah: A diamond is forever?

Cait: How pervasive and how well the company did in terms of really planting that seed in people. Now, interestingly enough, in the same year in 1999, the then DeBeers chairman said, quote, diamonds are intrinsically worthless except for the deep psychological need they fill.

Sarah: Wow, that's interesting. And probably very, very true. You know, if De Beers had picked out something else like a shiny pebble, if they could have made that go as far as the diamond, I don't know.

Cait: Mm. I'm sure you could make anything that is intrinsically worthless feel valuable. It really does just come down to marketing and

Sarah: doesn't it? Diamonds are a girl's best friend.

Cait: Yeah. That's how we look at it. Literally. There's songs,

Sarah: I mean that's like something that comes into your mind, isn't it? Also, how ingrained is it in our culture that diamonds Yeah are a girl's best friend?

Cait: So diamond mining can be quite destructive both to the environment, but also to the workers and the community. I want a caveat by saying, I'm not saying all diamond mining is bad but all of it has an impact. And there have

been many, many documented cases of egregious acts. One of 'em in Zimbabwe where there are diamond mines. They found that the local communities were displaced and this resulted in an escalation of violence towards women that were then either forced into the sex trade or assaulted. And this leads to unrest. In other areas, diamonds are sold to finance civil war, for weaponry and you know, obviously terrorizes local communities, tears communities apart, leads to an increase in sex trafficking and also child soldiers.

So, um, yeah diamond

Sarah: Nothing good?

Cait: Yeah, nothing, nothing great there. There's also been a lot of instances of working conditions, including prevalence of child, below poverty wages, and really poor living conditions, which lead to the spread of diseases among those communities. So,

Sarah: wow. If you've had that written in your Valentine's card when you opened your box, you might not be so excited about it.

Cait: and then

Sarah: Crickey!

Cait: In addition to the impact on the communities, there's several different ways you can mine diamonds. And again, it's not the same for every type of mine, but it can lead to soil erosion, deforestation, air pollution, water pollution, disruption of the local flora, fauna, native species, communities. Yeah, not great.

Sarah: It's not great. Imagine. I just had like a moment in my head when you were talking about that, and I dunno if they do this in the US but definitely in New Zealand, all cigarette packets have to be sold with images of cancerous tongues, tumors, horrific pictures that are designed to put you off from purchasing it because you know $A + B = C$.

Wouldn't it be great if. Every product had the story of the negative impact on it.

Cait: So I don't actually don't think it would be a good thing. And the reason I say that

Sarah: Do you not?

Cait: No. Is because people then become desensitized to it and just ignore it. So I think it's better to punctuate things every once in a while, like in a conversation or like listening to Guilty Greenie.

Sarah: Okay.

Cait: As opposed to becoming numb to it.

Sarah: Yeah, maybe

Cait: let's talk about options for diamonds and jewelry.

Sarah: Diamonds.

Cait: So you can look for diamonds that are certified by the Kimberley process. Have you ever heard of this?

Sarah: No. What's the Kimberley process? So is that like a fake diamond making, like a manmade diamond?

No. No.

Cait: Okay. So the Kimberley process is a certification scheme that you can track the origin. It provides a certificate of origin from the diamond itself to guarantee a fair working conditions and conflict free. It makes sure it comes from a conflict free zone.

Sarah: Okay. Say the name again? Kimberley.

Cait: Kimberley Process or Kimberley Certificate. The other thing you can do is you can look for Fair Mine certification or Fair Trade. You can look for those.

Sarah: Right.

Cait: And you know, you can thrift, you can buy antique jewelries. Jewelry that's already on the market that you're not contributing to the ongoing mining process. I love antique jewelry. Almost all my jewelry is antique. I love it.

Sarah: If Gareth listens to this episode, my husband, he's gonna be like, yes, I've nailed it. He's never bought a diamond in his life because I proposed to him.

Cait: Did you?

Sarah: Um, I did. And that's the thing about valentine's Day as well. We're talking about gifts that are predominantly given to women, which also annoys me slightly.

Cait: Yep.

Sarah: Unnecessary that we still have that gender imbalance and just putting it out there.

Cait: Yeah. All right. Well, where do you wanna go next? We got chocolate and flowers. Speaking of gifts.

Sarah: Let's go chocolate cuz uh oh, I'm hungry. That's why. Love bit of chocolate .

Cait: All right.

Sarah: Don't tell me bad things about chocolate.

Cait: We're gonna kick off with a bit of history first yet again. So you know the heart shape box.

Sarah: Yes.

Cait: Do you have them there?

Sarah: Well, I mean, yeah, you can buy heart shake boxes,

Cait: but like the, you know, the red or pink ones that are ubiquitous at Valentine's Day. Yeah.

Sarah: They probably do, but again, I'm not in the market so I don't notice them, but yeah,

Cait: fair enough.

Sarah: I'm sure people are screaming at their phone right now going, yes. Sarah They are everywhere.

Cait: She's just, she has her love blinders on . Um, so that was first introduced in an 1861, and today there are more than 36 million of those boxes sold. I believe that's only for the United States for Valentine's Day, and that works out to about 58 million pounds of chocolate. And I'm...

Sarah: oh right, okay. Cuz they've got chocolate in them. That makes sense. Why are they selling heart shaped empty boxes? So you're talking about chocolate boxes with

Cait: Yeah.

Sarah: In the shape of hearts. Okay. Yeah. I'm with you now. Slow, but I'm there clearly. I've never received one.

Cait: I'm sorry. I just find this so funny that you were thinking I was just talking about empty heart shape.

Sarah: What are they doing? Just selling empty heart boxes. Ok. Oh, oh my gosh.

Cait: Yeah. Okay. Okay. So clearly you haven't received you American, one of those, I don't know. Yeah. Oh my gosh.

All right. So Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire are the world's largest cocoa producers. They supply about 60% of the world's supply of cocoa. In 2015, the US Labor Department estimated that there are more than 2 million children engaged in dangerous labor in the cocoa growing regions. So child labor has been a concern in cocoa production for a very, very long time with the top producers over the years saying that they are working to eradicate it from their supply chain. But it's proven not to happen yet. So.

Sarah: Gosh. Okay. And When, when you say it's proven not to happen, there hasn't been any progress?

Cait: So there has been some progress. I don't

Sarah: Trace it back? Yeah,

Cait: I don't wanna say that there hasn't been any progress. There definitely has been some progress, but yeah, one of the problems is that companies still can't identify even close to a hundred percent where their cocoa's coming from and whether or not child labor was used to produce it. So that's been an issue.

Sarah: So is there anywhere that you can get chocolate that is authentically guilt-free in terms of not the calories, but you know ?

Cait: Yes.

Sarah: The labor.

Cait: Yeah. You can look for Fair Trade Certified. You can look for Rainforest Alliance certified. The other thing is to shop at local chocolate stores, and you can ask them, it's called Bean to Bar. They are more likely to know where their bean was actually grown and produced as opposed to just buying generic in a grocery store. Dark chocolate has a smaller environmental footprint than milk chocolate. So because cocoa production uses a lot of water and then once you add milk into that, you have the environmental footprint of milk production as well. So dark chocolate is much more environmentally friendly. And the other thing to keep in mind is to try to avoid chocolate that has plastic wrap around.

Sarah: Yes. The old foil wrappers. Yeah. I feel like they're moving away from that. And some of the brands that I see now in the UK supermarkets and actually

Cait: mm-hmm.

Sarah: I've just seen that mars, yep, this is not an advert for Mars, has just gone to its first full paper wrapper.

Cait: That's incredible.

Yeah. There you go.

Well, let's, uh, I'll give you some thoughts on flowers.

Sarah: Choppity chop.

Cait: Do you like flowers? Do you like getting flowers?

Sarah: I do like getting flowers. In fact, it was my birthday last week or so, and my husband did get flowers for me, which was really sweet.

Cait: Happy birthday.

Sarah: Thanks.

Cait: This is the first time I'm hearing about this.

Sarah: Well, I mean, I'm not a big birthday person, as you can tell. I'm not into gifts or anything like that, but I'll tell you what was really sweet is he's away at the moment and he had phoned the florist to get these flowers, and I had tulips in my bouquet when I was married and for some reason, Sometimes he just like hones in on a flower. I get flowers very rarely, like it is an annual occurrence, biannual sometimes. But the florist had rung to say, look, I don't have that color of tulip. Is it okay if I use these? And I said, well, I'm literally just outside the shop cuz I happen to be walking past, going to meet a friend in a cafe beside it. And I said, I'll, I'll just be next door. I'll nip in when I'm finished and come and pick them up. But he knew that I was in next door so this big flower bouquet gets delivered to my table at the cafe. Isn't that cute? It was on my birthday.

Cait: That's straight from a Hallmark movie.

Sarah: I was. Um, but now you're gonna destroy that and tell me how bad that was. So go.

Cait: Um, you know, again, it's perspective and you know, yeah, I am. I am gonna tell you how bad it is.

Sarah: you're gonna do that.

Cait: I'm just gonna do that.

Sarah: Mm-hmm. So the global tulips not a flower that's native to the UK either. I mean, clearly they were from across the way. Yes. But there's a, in Holland,

Cait: there's a fun fact about that. And by fun, I mean, not fun, but I, I'll give you that fact in a second. Um, so global flower productions, it's estimated to be around 64 billion euros. That was in 2020 and Valentine's Day is the number one holiday for florist and floral purchasers. Christmas a second.

Sarah: Is it?

Cait: Yeah. Which I was trying to think of, and I was thinking, were people buying like Point Settas or Point Setos, however you call them. And wreaths, I feel like it's more greenery. So on Valentine's Day, Americans spend around 2

billion, a little over 2 billion. Most of those are roses. I believe it's 69% are roses. Most of those flowers from the United States come from Columbia and Ecuador. That's second and third to the Netherlands. So the Netherlands is one of the largest producers. Columbian and Ecuador come in second. Last year, Columbia shipped around 4 billion flowers to the United States. It's a lot.

Sarah: Wow. I mean, and also you've gotta think how much effort that takes to keep them fresh.

Cait: That was my next point. So not, yeah.

Sarah: And then, yeah, they're not being delivered with their roots on in the soil.

Cait: Not only are they being shipped, but you have the emissions cost of growing, but then you also have emissions from transportation. And part of that transportation also includes refrigeration.

Sarah: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. So,

Cait: oh, no, not, not great. There was one stat and I tried to find like what would be comparable and I wasn't successful, but the carbon emissions associated with a cut flower is three kilograms of CO₂ per flower, so it's actually quite high. Per flower.

Sarah: Per Per flower?

Cait: Yeah, per flower.

Sarah: Three kilograms of CO₂ emissions per flower.

Cait: Yeah.

Sarah: I'm, if I could do maths sitting down on my table right now is a crime scene. Oh my God.

Cait: Yeah. It's quite high per flower.

Sarah: It's just, I actually feel physically sick. They're in the house right now. I'm gonna have to dry them and bake them into goods.

Cait: I mean, you could make your own little potpurri

So you're in the UK, you would probably assume that getting flowers from the Netherlands is going to have less of an impact than getting flowers from Kenya. Safe to assume that? I am setting you up.

Sarah: A terrible poker player. I can see your tells.

Cait: In the Netherlands, they use a much more intensive farming method. So a lot of greenhouse. Which are run off of fossil fuels, whereas in Kenya it's a much more natural, and that's not to say it's a hundred percent natural or anything like that. Yeah. Um, ,

Sarah: but they're perhaps using the, the natural resources like sunlight, which exactly, you know, we don't get quite so much over here

Cait: Now, the other couple of things to keep in mind though is that when you're growing flowers on an industrial scale, it requires a lot of pesticides and other agrochemicals. It's both to grow and preserve them. There was one paper that said exposure to chemicals like organo phosphates can lead to multiple health problems including cancers, mental health problems, and reproductive issues.

Sarah: Wow. That's the gift you don't want to give anyone. Here's a bouquet full of poison. Happy Valentine's. And by the way, enjoy your three-legged child.

Cait: Now, to be fair, to be fair, this is mostly, you know, talking about the workers who don't always have appropriate PPE, they're exposed to on a daily basis. There is like a lot of industries issues with low wages, lack of healthcare, or appropriate healthcare.

Sarah: Yeah. A right shit storm.

Cait: Yeah. And then because it's so water intensive, depending on where it's grown, it can pull that water from local communities. And it also supplants what they would be growing for crops to a mono crops, such as the flowers. So it can lead to malnutrition and certain areas. It can lead to lack of water to irrigate those other crops and so on and so forth. So, Super fun.

Sarah: Super fun. Happy Valentine's, everybody. Enjoy it.

Cait: I'll give you some tips.

Sarah: Yeah, you need to pull this back into something that's not quite so depressing. This will be everybody's least favorite holiday. Go .

Cait: I did see some stats and I didn't write them down. I wish I had about how many people actually get divorced or separated on Valentine's Day but I was like, that's really, I was like, that's super depressing. I'm not gonna, I'm not gonna bring that into the conversation.

Sarah: Oh yeah, no, cuz you've been a real mood lightener today anyway, so

Cait: I'm trying.

Sarah: why? Why throw that there? Why stop there?

Cait: All right. Sustainability tips. Look for organically certified so we know. Yes, we're not using those chemicals. Look for Fair Trade, again. Support your local florist. Same with chocolate. You wanna support local business, but they tend to know what their product comes from as opposed to like a box store where they

Sarah: mm-hmm.

Cait: they may not, the employees may not know. You may need to do digging on your own. Try to find flowers that are wrapped in organic or biodegradable material. So not the plastic wrap. You wanna find like a, a paper and, you know, brown string as opposed to, Plastic,

Sarah: cellophane..

Cait: Yeah. Yeah. And then another really good suggestion is to get a plant instead of flowers. So for instance, maybe an orchid or a succulent, or cactus if they don't like to water things. If the person you're getting a gift for likes to cook, maybe something like a basil plant or rosemary plant, something that they can remember beyond a week.

Sarah: That is such a good idea. And, if we were doing highs and lows, that would be my high. Because of a low. Somebody had had a, a loss in the family, so I saw I'll send them something, you know, flowers and I was conscious that I didn't want to do something wasteful. So I did. I sent them an actual planted pot that they can put in their garden as a little place to remember or what have you.

Cait: I like that.

Sarah: But it's just as meaningful as a bunch of flowers. It's something that carries on and you can keep for longer as well. Yeah, because that's the thing that does bug me about flowers. You've just bought something to die.

Cait: Well, yeah. And then let's talk about all the waste, all those flowers, all those cards, all the wrapping, all of that, hopefully not the diamonds, but all of it ends up in the landfill.

Sarah: Yeah. Not great.

Cait: Not, not, not great. So yay for ending on a high note .

Sarah: I think definitely if you're getting the bunch of flowers, you've already got them. Put them into the green waste. Yep. If you've got a green waste. If you have green waste at least.

Yep. Yeah. I would like to have a little revolution. Okay. A Valentine's Revolution whereby we stop the commercialism. I mean, I'm 47 years into this pledge to be fair. Uh, but if others want to join me to make it not so commercial and find other ways to demonstrate love for one another. Yeah. And there's so many ways you can do the acts of service, give a little, you know, fake voucher experiences.

Cait: Experiences.

Sarah: Experiences. And also I just kind of feel like I wanna strip back the fact that it, it seems to be a one way street a lot. It's very much, I think it's still guys giving to girls. Yeah. So we don't need that. That's another kind of layer of Well,

Cait: sexism,

Sarah: embedded. Yeah. Sexism and our culture that we just don't need to have. And also please, women, if you are listening, I am on a sexism rant lately.

Cait: You really are like lately.

Sarah: I'm sorry. I'm so mad at the world about it all the time at the moment, just it seems to be springing up in my face. I'm so sick of seeing TV programs where women wait for the men to propose.

Cait: Mm-hmm.

Sarah: That just pisses me off to no end. We, we don't need to be waiting. Ladies, take the bull by the horns.

Cait: No, I agree with that.

Sarah: Sorry. Rant over.

Cait: You're good. So bringing this back to the Valentine's Day, sorry. No, you're good. Experiences act, you know, activities. Home-cooked meals are actually less wasteful than going out to a restaurant on Valentine's Day. Plus, they're so overcrowded and you will pay out for a Valentine's Day menu, and I feel like you don't get the best of the best from that restaurant because they're just mm-hmm. , you know,

Sarah: churning them out.

Cait: Yeah, exactly. Not to say restaurants are bad on Valentine's Day. I'd say take the day to enjoy your partner instead of buy what I would call like buying your partner, if that makes sense. That sounds horrible. That's gonna make a terrible sound bite.

Sarah: No, I think that that's very much the case, isn't it? But also I think make it clear to your partner that you don't want that, that they can do other things. In fact, keep their pesticide filled bouquets of flowers. Let's just be kind to each other and take it back to what it really should be. It's a day to celebrate love. Yeah. Not buy it.

Cait: Not buy it. Yeah. That's a, that's much better than saying don't buy your partner.

Okay. Well, with that I hope everyone does have a wonderful Valentine's Day. However you do choose to celebrate it, whether that is with a loved one, with family, with friends by yourself. Loving yourself is important, but yeah, I hope everyone has a wonderful Valentine's Day.

As you mentioned, we are coming back with season two eventually.

Sarah: Yeah, season two. You had to pause there. You were like what numbers? Yes. We're back on the numbers.

Cait: In the meantime, if you would like to support Guilty Greenie, you can always share these episodes with family, friends, colleagues, a stranger on the street. We don't mind. Or you can leave a review on Apple Podcast. If you would like to financially support Guilty Greenie, it is an independently produced podcast, so any donations are truly appreciated so that we can produce faster, essentially. You can go to buymeacoffee.com/guiltygreenie. It would mean the world for us.

Sarah: It'll keep us going and also what will keep us going, if you want to send in your suggestions for any ideas that you would like covered on season three, we are open for hearing it all.

Cait: Well, until then,

Sarah: stay curiously green.

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Cait: told me that a Columbine could have happened at Columbine, I would've said no

Sarah: way. I

Cait: remember just thinking he's got a gun, something rose up inside and I said, not my school. What we can't under. Is the power that individuals could have when stopping these school shootings.

My little boy, Alex was murdered. If we can fix the failures, we can save

Sarah: lives. My

Cait: daughter Elena was killed. She'd want me to do something about this. I know she would do something about

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