

# Getting a handle on grocery bags

The made-in-Maine Baggler aims to take the hassle out of carrying plastic shopping bags.

By GISELLE GOODMAN  
Staff Writer

Sherry Saucier used to hate the way her plastic grocery bags would spill their contents all over the back of the car during the ride home. Canned goods went everywhere.

Not anymore, thanks to The Baggler. "They aren't going everywhere because they're already on the hook," said Saucier of Biddeford. What's more, she can now carry three or four plastic grocery bags at once, with complete comfort. "Obviously you're feeling the weight, but it's not cutting into your hand."

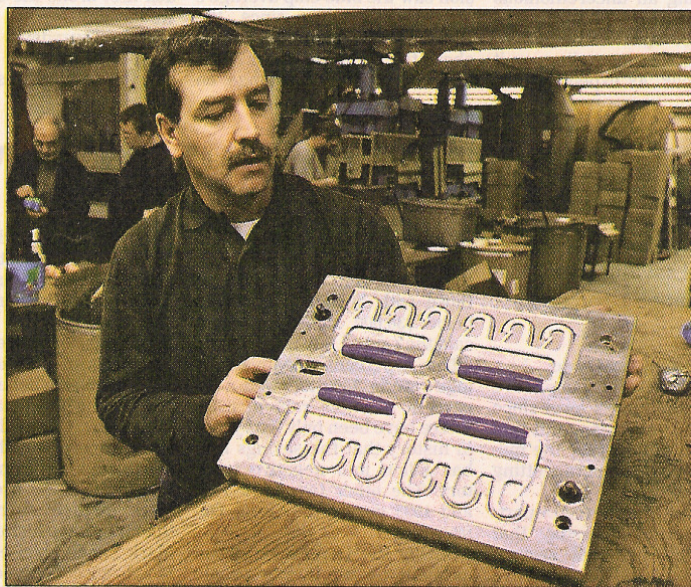
Such nuisances were what drove Mark Eichenbaum of Augusta to create his handy, dandy invention, The Baggler. It is designed to "put an end to the pain, hassle and inconvenience that you experience carrying and handling all of those plastic bags the stores and markets give you to carry your purchases."

It is also another feather in Maine's economic hat. The Baggler, which is fetching attention from regional grocery stores and is being sold nationwide, was invented in, designed in and is made in Maine.

That "Made in Maine" label is one reason that Hannaford Bros. will begin carrying The Baggler in all its stores beginning February, retailing somewhere around \$4.49 each.

"We currently have an inexpensive carrier that's made in China, and we want to take this opportunity to support a Maine company by selling this one instead," said Caren Epstein, Hannaford's spokeswoman.

Eichenbaum's Baggler offers a cushy, squared-off handle with three hooks. Each hook can handle 18 pounds, which means The Baggler can carry nearly 50 pounds worth of



Staff photo by Jack Milton

Gary Gagon's Springvale business, G&G Products, is manufacturing The Baggler, a device used to carry multiple plastic shopping bags. An aluminum injection mold is used to form the thermoplastic handle pad.

shopping bags and their contents. The Baggler itself weighs 1.7 ounces and is a little larger than a wallet. Need more details? It can be viewed at Eichenbaum's Web site, [www.thebaggler.com](http://www.thebaggler.com), along with ordering information and a list of stores that carry the device.

The idea was born a year ago out of Eichenbaum's annoyance while shopping with his mother. She could only handle a few things in each bag, and "\$50 worth of groceries meant 50 bags," he said.

Then there was the trip home, which, like Saucier experienced, meant groceries all over. "We wouldn't find a can of tomato soup until a week later," said Eichenbaum, a car salesman by trade. "It would roll under the spare tire."

Eichenbaum starting looking around. He found some bag handles already on the market, such as the Grip It, an upside-down coat hanger of sorts, and the EZ Carry - same sort of idea with a divot in the hook.

They solved the problem of plastic bags digging into the arm, but none seemed to touch the issue of bags emptying out in the car.

"What good is that?" Eichenbaum said. "You want the bags to stay attached."

He started by drawing his idea of a perfect bag-carrying handle. He wanted to make sure the hooks secured the bags but also made it easy to slip the

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Staff photo by Matt Wickenheiser

**Mark Eichenbaum**, creator of The Bagglers, demonstrates how the device can hold multiple shopping bags. "I think we've got a great start," he said.

the store. But since she works at G&G Products, she was able to take a few home. First her kids tried them out. It was a fun way for them to help with the grocery shopping. Then Saucier got a hold of one and couldn't believe what she'd been missing.

Since then, "I've given some to my aunt and mom and sisters," she said.

Word of mouth is nice. Store display is even better. Eichenbaum said he's pleased about Hannaford's acceptance of the product. He is now knocking on Wal-Mart's door. And despite the fact that he does have some

competition, he is greatly optimistic.

"I think we're going to sell millions of Bagglers," said Eichenbaum, who invested more than \$35,000 to go from idea to invention. "It's a great product, but what we need to do is get it in stores. I want (the stores) to put me in the canned good section, where the heavy things are. We've got something that is really a lot of fun and it really helps a lot of people."

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