

All wrapped up

A Cagnois on a mission to save the sea

We all try to be eco-friendly nowadays, but few are doing as much as Cagnes-Sur-Mer native, Guillaume Willm. When he's not out cleaning the sea, he makes a range of bee's wax food wraps to replace plastic cling film, helping us all to break the plastic habit! Kimberley Mannion met this eco-warrior on the beach in Nice.

A free-diving enthusiast, Guillaume Willm regularly goes on deep dives to clean up the sea floor, often pulling up old tyres, bunches of old fishing nets and even lost sails. His passion for the environment and particularly saving polluted seas comes through in everything he does. Guillaume's 'beeswraps' are zero-waste and made by hand here in the Côte d'Azur with wax from a local Apiculteur. They come in a range of sizes and colours and are soft, supple and naturally anti-bacterial. Reusable over and over, his wraps can cover leftovers, protect cut fruits and veg, package your lunch and more. We ask to Guillaume about his business and what we can all do to be more eco-friendly.

RI: How did you get the idea for your business?

GW: I lived in Byron Bay, Australia for two years and when I returned to the Côte d'Azur I wanted to do something for the environment and reduce plastic in the sea and on the beaches. In Byron Bay, there was a market every second Sunday where I discovered bee's wax wraps. I learned about the ecological business and how to make the products, then launched my own wraps business there called *Green Clean Wraps*.



Guillaume Willm with his eco beeswraps © K.M.

There were only two other bee's wax wraps businesses in France when I returned, so I developed my idea with friends, and launched *L'Abeille qui Emballe* in 2017.

Have you always been interested in environmentalism?

Growing up, I loved surfing and going to the mountains to hike and snowboard and I swam with turtles and dolphins while travelling. Seeing the beauty in this world made me worry for the environment, especially after witnessing so much pollution myself. There is a relationship between loving nature and what drives us to be eco-friendly. In France, the term eco-friendly can sometimes be used pejoratively, but it is about protecting what already exists and reviving destroyed ecosystems.

Outside your business, what do you do to help the environment?

I am passionate about freediving and mix this with service to the environment. I am a member of two local groups: *Paddle Cleaner* and *Opération Mer Propre*. We pick up kilos of plastic from the sea to help clean it up. It is a bit ironic, as my business is about stopping any waste getting there in the first place and then my hobby is removing it!

Have attitudes towards environmentalism in France changed since you started L'Abeille qui Emballe?

There was already an awareness of plastic being a problem, but the term 'zero-waste' has definitely emerged a lot more since I

started. Progress is being made slowly - large retailers and big organisations like the EU talk about zero-waste, yet we still see so much plastic in shops, packaging and everyday life. Looking at the pandemic, on one hand people have cooked and created things themselves at home a lot more which is positive, but on the other hand so many plastic masks and gloves have been used, plus people stockpile buying through fear! Ultimately, if individuals change their behaviour and refuse single use plastic, the industry will have to adapt.

What can people who want to be more eco-friendly do?

The first step is to refuse plastic as much as possible, like not buying bottled water. Go to small local shops, which also helps the local economy. Eat fruits that are in season to cut out excessive transportation and stop buying unnecessary things. Be an example to others - call friends out if they drop litter, every small gesture can make a difference!

What are your hopes for the future?

Lockdown has allowed everyone to slow down and breathe a bit, and I hope this trend continues! I hope that humans learn to live in harmony with the other species of the earth. ▀

You can follow Guillaume and his colourful wraps on Instagram @labeillequiemballe