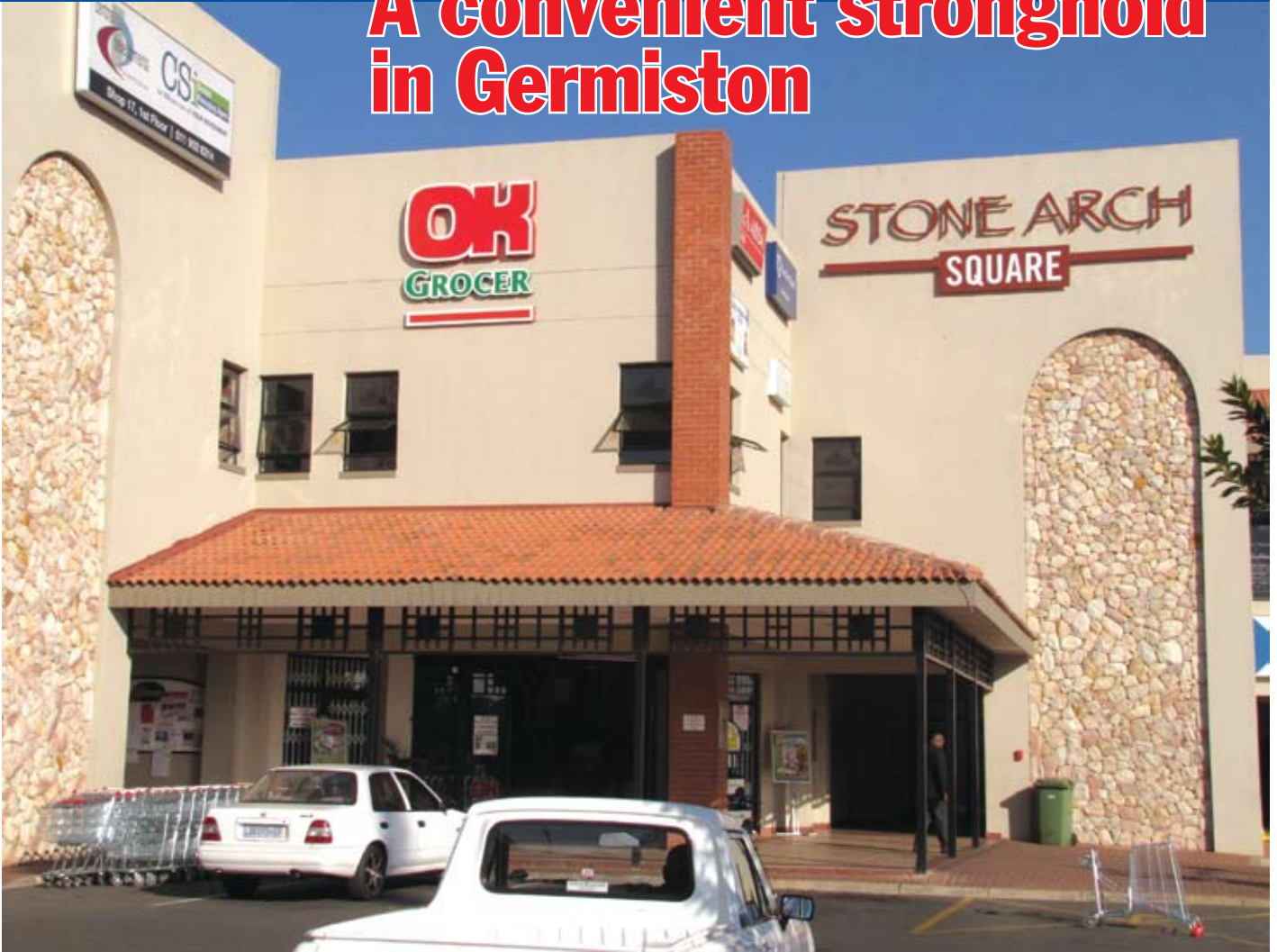


A convenient stronghold in Germiston



Being the anchor store in a centre and the only supermarket in the area has certainly been an advantage for Stone Arch OK.

Right location, reasonable pricing and an unique offering to customers is key to success

BY LAURA DURHAM

Boasting the only Enjoy@OK liquor store in Gauteng, and as the only supermarket on the Castleview, Germiston side of the highway, Stone Arch OK Grocer provides convenience, the freshest produce and good prices to the surrounding area.

More to Enjoy

OK is rolling out liquor outlets across the country but for now Stone Arch OK is the only store in Gauteng to boast one. Although quite small at 70m² (including back-up), Enjoy is doing very well since opening. OK Grocer still carries wine in the supermarket but the two don't compete for customers as they are merely separate stores with one profit centre. Enjoy is competitively priced and was, for example, the cheapest in South Africa for Richelieu two months ago.

Right time, right place

Building Stone Arch Square alongside the Stone Arch Estate, with OK Grocer as the anchor tenant was a clever move by OK. And nearly doubling sales since the supermarket opened in November 2008 proves that Stone Arch OK is getting it right. "We are a

franchise but we have the independence to be able to do our own pricing," says Tibbie Jacobs, GM of the Stone Arch store.

Convenient choice

The store's closest rivals are across the highway in Lambton, which means that Stone Arch OK is the sole retailer of the surrounding area. The customer base of the store falls into the LSM 4–6 group and being in walking distance for the Stone Arch Estate residents mean that 90% of them shop at the store.

In accordance with their customer profile, Stone Arch OK stocks the top SKUs and just a few luxury items. "It is a different buying culture here," says Jacobs, "so we don't stock many speciality lines."

The meat to beat

The butchery is the best selling department and the store prides itself in only serving top quality meat. The in-house butcher, Cecilia Diedrichs, provides customers with specialised cuts and she has introduced some tasty treats, such as bacon bites, into the butchery offering.

They run a two-day expiry cycle to ensure that customers only receive the freshest and best quality meat. "Not compromising anything is very important in our store," Jacob says.

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STOREWATCH ►

Fresh is best

The store's buyer goes to the Johannesburg Market every third morning to ensure that the shelves are fully stocked with the freshest produce. The sales increase of 40% indicates that customers appreciate the quality and freshness of the produce. Soup warmers are also cleverly placed near the fresh department, promoting the healthy and wholesome benefits of the hot meal.

Everything in the bakery is made from scratch on site and the sponge cakes and cream donuts go down well with the customers. But by far the best selling items are the bread rolls. "Just because of rolls people are going to or leaving a shop," Jacob says. Whenever a staff member joins one of the service departments they are trained by their manufacturers and given a probation period in which to prove that they are right for that department.

A community stronghold

Becoming a landmark in the community by hosting regular fun days and flea markets and generously supporting those in need is part of the charm of Stone Arch OK Grocer. Their most recent 5km fun run in March had 1 000 participants. Suppliers are always very generous with prize donations at such events. A flea market is held every month at the centre and there is a festive atmosphere outside the store every weekend with live music and the smell of boerewors braaing that draws customers inside the store. Every staff member was given an official supporter T-shirt and the store organised a function in the basement for the opening of the World Cup to treat staff and their most loyal customers.



Stone Arch boasts the only Enjoy@OK liquor store in Gauteng. It boasted the cheapest price for Richeieu a few months ago, according to general manager, Tibbie Jacobs.

Lunchtime trade

Jacobs says their HMR department is drawing feet into the door, particularly at lunch time and late afternoon when the industry

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20th
Anniversary

Cinnamon Rings
Lemon Creams
SIX LOVE
Marie



Mutton curry and wors stew is very popular with the industry workers who come to the store in their lunch break.



Bread rolls can make or break a store so Stone Arch OK bakes everything from scratch every day.

Store: **StoneArch OK**

Location: **Castleview, Germiston**

Store size: **870 m²** Tills: **6**

Average basket size: **R40**

Transactions: **46 000 per month**

workers are looking for a bite to eat. The most popular dish is the mutton curry, followed by wors stew. Takeaway combos, such as the quarter chicken, chips and coke for R24.99, are also well received by the

customers looking for a wholesome meal at a reasonable price. They also prepare snack platters that customers can buy for parties and functions.

Giving back and taking back

The store has an impressive return policy, which lets customers receive a new product, as well as getting their money back immediately. "We are also giving back, to the community," says Jacobs. They support local children's homes and try to involve the neighbouring schools in all their projects. Just last month, they helped two children by sponsoring their school tour. The store also donates fruit and vegetables to needy families nearby. Including these giveaways, wastage in the fresh department is still below 5% .

Franchise freedom

Although an OK franchise, Stone Arch OK can set its own prices. They send out 50 000 leaflets a month and hold in-house specials each month, such as 2l Coke for R9.99. "The recession really isn't over and retailers are only now starting to feel it. Customers are very price-sensitive," Jacobs says.

So much more

The store also offers additional services, such as lotto tickets and prepaid electricity.

As the anchor store of the Stone Arch Square centre, customers are also drawn to the supermarket because of the convenience of a one-stop shopping experience. The centre boasts restaurants and takeaways, car wash, gym, travel agency, laundromat, pharmacy, estate agents and even a church on the upper level (which boosts their Sunday trade).

Looking beyond

The store would like to increase its customer base and is approaching companies and schools to purchase their groceries from Stone Arch OK. They also do deliveries all around Johannesburg and Pretoria.

With a customer base in the 4–6 LSM group, Stone Arch OK stocks basic lines and a few luxury items.

