

# Redefining retail with flagship store



BY LAURA DURHAM

## Pick n Pay on Nicol is where cosmopolitan cuisine, environmental care and customer focus converge

*The new flagship store, Pick n Pay on Nicol is all about treating its customers to a unique retail experience through innovative design, an exclusive product offering and an array of environmentally friendly initiatives.*

**Pick n Pay's new flagship store, which opened on 20 October, is all about treating its customers to a unique retail experience. The store is set to rekindle the love of food amongst its upmarket customers, with an impressive assortment of organic and exotic products, as well as providing a platform for many local suppliers. The store also boasts some of the most impressive green initiatives, with even the nearby William Nicol intersection traffic lights operating on solar power. The exclusivity of the store is furthered by the artisan department offering – fish market, cheese room, wine cellar and juice bar to name a few.**

### A food experience

Pick n Pay has fashioned the new store into a food emporium where customers can re-learn and reconnect with food. Every fresh department provides a sensory experience for customers and the inclusion of a

number of artisan departments provides every exotic, organic or specialised ingredient for a gourmet meal. "We have combined the value of a trusted supermarket brand with the exclusivity and variety of a boutique store that ultimately offers customers a truly unique shopping experience," says Peter Arnold, Pick n Pay's GM of fresh foods.

### Lessons in food

The entire management team was sent on an intensive 18-day food education course. "We wanted to make our staff proper foodies so they completely understand the business," says Arnold. Each department either has a specialist, such as Peter Short who comes out of the wine industry, or specialised manager whose focus is entirely on his/her specific department. The management team have therefore been equipped with knowledge of ingredients, recipes and the entire food offering to share with customers.

In addition, the Good Food Studio upstairs boasts a cooking school for customers, with special classes that cater for beginners, bachelors, domestics, aspiring chefs and everything in-between.

A professional chef will lead chefs-to-be in state-of-the-art kitchens and provide recipes and ingredients lists, all of which can be found in the food emporium downstairs.

Another feature of the store are the two recipe centres. One is situated in the fresh departments and accompanied by a good selection of recipe books and the other is at the checkout at the demonstration platform, which will host different recipe and cuisine styles each week. The interactive kiosk allows customers to browse different categories (desserts, cakes, fish dishes etc) with the option of either printing out the recipe and ingredient list in-store or emailing to their own email address.

### "Doing good is good business"

Pick n Pay on Nicol's product range is vast and the Company has actively sought to provide a platform for local suppliers. Information boards – nearly 240 across the store – give customers interesting and useful information about some of these products and others that have been imported, furthering the importance of food knowledge in the store. ►



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## STOREWATCH ▶

We were looking at sustainability from a productivity level and we chose to bring in local suppliers who themselves follow sustainable practices," says Arnold. The strictest health and safety standards are in place and all small suppliers were guided through the compliance process with the help of Pick n Pay food technologists.

### Nurturing the customer/food relationship

The new store is a big move away from the traditional box format of the old school supermarket. Instead, Pick n Pay on Nicol boasts double-volume glass windows that bathe the store in natural light, creating a fresh and open atmosphere. Each department has its own symbol, such as a bone for pet care and a carrot for fresh produce. According to Arnold, the store has gone for a more visual look – as opposed to lengthy descriptions to nurture the customer/food relationship.

Aisle signage and promotion boards are made from recycled material and in muted tones. "We don't want the boards to stand out because we want the focus to be on the food and the customers and their relationship," he explains. The smaller signage, which is visible but not obtrusive, is also a way to draw customers down the aisles. Bulk displays and supplier stands are also notably absent but this is to reduce aisle clutter and "again emphasise our goal of comfortable convenience for customers."

### Through the fresh departments

The layout of the store means that customers are navigated through the various fresh complementary fresh departments (such as cheese and wine next to each other) before reaching the grocery lines. A knowledge trail is also left by the recipe cards scattered throughout, which feature the foods on display.

### Fresh flower emporium

Fresh flowers greet customers as they enter the store and the dedicated services of a florist mean that customers can get beautiful bouquets made up and may even incorporate other gift ideas from the in-store gift kiosk.

### Bakery

Artisan baker, Louis de Beer has trained many previously unemployed people into specialist bakers and each unit of pastry



Artisan departments create a food emporium store feel in the store. The Cheese Room accommodates more than 40 imported cheese brands and customers can even order a maturing cheese wheel and the store will notify them when it is ripe and ready for collection.



Store manager, Nigel Money stands next to one of the recipe centres in-store, which allows customers to browse different categories (desserts, cakes, fish dishes etc) with the option of either printing out the recipe and ingredient list in-store or emailing to their own email address.



The store has a dedicated E-Services Zone, separate to the kiosk, with a full range of offerings. These allow customers to book flights through Pick n Pay Travel, make use of banking services from Nedbank and even due money transfers as of the second week of November.



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*A first for a corporate store is the on-site pharmacy, complete with a counselling room.*



*This department has a huge variety on offer and the range of organic produce is impressive. The use of natural light and open space adds to the enjoyment of the shopping experience for customers.*



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*The Good Food Studio upstairs boasts a cooking school for customers, with special classes that cater for beginners, bachelors, domestics, aspiring chefs and everything in-between. All ingredients used are available in the store downstairs.*



chefs, confectioners, patisserie chefs and bakers has since been encouraged to form their own commercial entities, the services of which are then leased by the supermarket. De Beer has introduced a number of rustic artisan breads to the bakery such as German sour dough, rye, French baguette and ciabatta.

### **The fish shop**

The fresh and gourmet seafood offering is impressive for even a dedicated fish shop at the coast, let alone a supermarket in Gauteng. Founder of Pick n Pay, Raymond Ackerman said it was the best he'd ever seen.

### **Butchery**

The store is all about service and the butchery has an extended service counter to give customers the widest range of gourmet cuts, prepared meat dishes and butcher advice. There is also a fresh biltong bar open at the butchery.

### **Wine cellar**

Renowned wine expert, Peter Short, shares his day between the Pick n Pay Liquor just outside the store and the wine department, which offers a wide selection of wines and champagnes. The temperature-controlled wine cellar houses the vintage and collectable bottles and multi-coloured lighting show these off well.

### **Cheese room**

Aside from the standard retail cheese offering, the Cheese room accommodates more than 40 imported cheese brands, as well as locally produced artisan cheeses. Customers can even order a maturing cheese wheel and the store will notify them when it is ripe and ready for collection. Fresh truffles that are available which highlights the exclusivity of the product range on offer.

### **Coffee time**

Bean There is the exclusive supplier of gourmet coffee to the store and certified baristas are on-site to share their knowledge with customers, as well as direct them to the lines of exclusive chocolates nearby.

### **Fresh produce**

There is a huge variety on offer in this department and the range of organic produce is impressive. Micro herbs, loose mushrooms and a display of Asian vegetables are some of the niche ranges that are available. There is also a fruit bar nearby that provides fruit salad, smoothies and freshly squeezed juice throughout the day.

## **Value the customer**

Every department has its own manager, so they can spend more time with their customers. There are no offices for managers, except for a management platform at the front-end of the store for admin tasks, and this means that managers are on the floor at all times. Customer care managers spend their day on the shop floor.

Communal queues have been put in place as they offer the most customer-friendly convenience and the queues to the 18 tills are lined with magazines and snacks. The seven express tills are conveniently situated at the kiosk, again utilising space well and improving the queuing experience for the customer. An ice cream counter is situated at this point too.

## **In-house personal care**

Another first for a corporate store is the on-site pharmacy, complete with a counselling room. The wide range of cosmetics is also complimented by the in-house specialists who even offer mini makeovers.

## **Take a little thyme**

Thyme on Nicol offers customers a stylish and convenient location to meet and enjoy a selection of healthy and nutritious breakfasts, deli-style lunches and sushi, freshly made by the three on-site sushi chefs. The coffee chop is equipped with Wi-Fi and is fully-licensed.

## **Value-add services**

The store has a dedicated E-Services Zone, separate to the kiosk, with a full range of offerings including insurance, Lotto and Power Ball, a Berco Drop Box courier service, event ticketing and gift card purchases. Customers can book flights through Pick n Pay Travel, as well as make use of banking services from Nedbank. Customers will be able to do money transfers to any Pick n Pay store in the country.

## **The green sheen**

As the greenest retailer in the country, the store boasts a number of environmentally friendly elements. These include skylights and glass walls to harvest the natural sunlight, retaining rain water to irrigate the indigenous gardens, porous paving, LED lighting and eco-wise refrigeration.

"This store is going to pull all our other Pick n Pay stores around the country to the future of retailing," said Adrian Naude, Gauteng GM at the opening.