

A Neighborhood Grocery Store



As a kid, I used to love to go to the neighborhood grocery store. I recall the cashier patting me on the head and giving me a tootsie roll. Picking penny candy from a bin.

Times have changed. I now look forward to my weekly trip to the chain supermarket with the same enthusiasm as I do my colonoscopy appointment.

Search for a parking spot that's not a mile away then grab the cart with the broken wheel. Download the app to get the lower advertised price using a digital coupon. Find out that 4 for \$5 doesn't mean \$1.25 each, must buy all four to get that deal, otherwise \$2.99 each. Wait ten-deep in line at the deli then another line at the seafood counter. Head up front to pay and find twenty closed checkout stands blocked off by police tape. Only one staffed with a cashier, the rest do-it-yourself.

Enter my 'rewards' number at the register for points. Number rejected. Check myself out, two items don't scan, three ring up at the wrong, always higher, price. Try to find a manager to fix my reward number and credit me for the wrong prices but manager is MIA. Bag my own groceries in toilet-paper thin plastic bags than cannot hold more than three items. Show my receipt to the dead-eyed security-clerk at the door to make sure I didn't pocket a candy bar. Trudge the mile back to the car. Try to put the cart back in a cart corral, but the corral is in a different zip code from where I'm parked.

I miss the old-fashioned neighborhood grocery store. But, like corner taverns, lunch counters, milkmen, paper boys and ice cream trucks, these kinds of things mostly vanished a long time ago, only alive in boomer memories.

Except one. Midtowne Market in St. Charles, Missouri.

Midtowne Market doesn't have an app, but they do have a fully functional customer service office where the phone is answered. No rewards program, but customer loyalty has been earned; customers bring gifts to the staff at Christmas. They don't have digital coupons, but the sale price is available to all. Zero 'do-it-yourself' check lanes. Registers are staffed with trained cashiers along with baggers who sack your groceries and take them to the car. When the lines back up, help is summoned over the intercom **"all baggers up front!"** until every checkout is opened.

The store is not easy to find. Midtowne Market is located in the middle of a neighborhood with homes built in the 1960s. The prices are competitive, but not the lowest. The building is a bit run down; still pretty much the same as it was when it opened in 1984.

And yet the store is a tremendous success, beloved in the community it serves. How is this possible?

Well, it's really not that complicated.



The store manager, (former-Marine John Fitch, pictured at left) is on site and on the sales floor. Oft times he's the first up front lending a hand. He'll bring your groceries to the car. He also offers samples on the weekend. Chances are he knows your name. You will certainly recognize him.

Midtowne doesn't advertise much but they host events such as the **Ribfest** (ribs grilled on the parking lot and sold for \$13 a slab) and **Neighborhood Treat of the Week**, where customers bring in their own cookie recipes which are then prepared, sampled, and voted on by customers as to the best. The winner's recipe is then added as a regular in-stock item. The competition is fierce.

Other events such as the **Massive Meat Sale** and **Holiday Open House** have become neighborhood traditions. Customers who have moved away years ago come back to partake.

The deli, is led by manager Michele, (who will tell you this is 'her' deli, not Midtowne's) is more like a little in-store restaurant.

Michele's deli offers fried chicken, rotisserie chicken, chicken salad, sub sandwiches, and sliced-to-order lunch meat, but you can also get a different home-cooked meal every day.

Try getting frog legs, jack salmon, liver & onions, smoked sausage and kraut, pot roast, or barbecued pork steaks at your local chain store.

JANUARY HOT DELI MENU						
GET A HOT, HOMESTYLE MEAL WITH 2 SIDES & A ROLL FOR JUST \$10.99-\$12.99						
Why settle for fast food? Get a fresh meal from our deli, ready when you are. Stop by between 10:30am and 7:00pm. All items also available by the pound.						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 Beef & Noodles	2 Jack Salmon	3 Smoked Sausage & Kraut
4 Salisbury Steak	5 Broccoli Cheese Soup	6 Baked Spaghetti	7 Chicken Pot Pie Casserole	8 Liver & Onions	9 Jambalaya	10 Apple Pork Chops
11 Chicken Broccoli Rice	12 Swedish Meatballs	13 Taco Salads	14 Loaded Potato Soup	15 Country Fried Steak	16 Frog Legs	17 Ribs
18 Chili	19 Chicken Stroganoff	20 Beef Stew	21 Red Beans and Rice	22 Ravioli	23 Meatball Sub	24 Chicken Enchilada
25 Beef & Barley Soup	26 Tuna Noodle	27 Chicken and Dumplings	28 Sausage & Fried Potatoes	29 Chicken Stir Fry	30 Fried Shrimp	31 Pork Fajita Burrito
DAILY SPECIALS						
Chef's Choice	Pot Roast	Fried Cod	Pot Roast	Cheese Burgers	Fried Cod	Pork Steaks
Stop by the deli today! Hot Food Served 10:30 AM - 7:00 PM • Call 636-724-3133 for details						



The bakery is staffed by trained cake decorators. They sculpt cakes that would make Picasso proud, like the cake pictured at left, inspired by the 2020 toilet paper shortage. These professionals are the one's whom personalize your loved one's birthday cake, not the kid who was hired yesterday. Master cake artist Ellen would not have it any other way, no cake leaves without her approval.

The donuts are fried fresh in store at 3:00 am. every morning, not delivered on a truck. Customer's won't find a stale donut lingering in the case in the evening. Midtowne doesn't sell stale donuts, when they're gone, they're gone. Your loss. Wake up earlier next time.

Mike, the produce manager, can tell you what state the corn is from, how each variety of apple tastes, even the current weather in the growing fields. Steve the meat manager, will trim your steak to order, tell you how to best prepare, suggest sides and wine pairing. Then remember to ask you "how was your meal?" the next time you're in the store.

So the secret to Midtowne's success? There's really not much new and improved at Midtowne Market. Midtowne operates 'old school' as it always has; it never changed what wasn't broke.

Food industry experts will tell you that supermarkets cannot go back to operating like Midtowne Market. Times **have** changed, and today's customers want on-line shopping, apps, digital coupons, self checkouts and all that jazz. Maybe, but give me Midtowne Market.

Now excuse me while I search for a good old-fashioned corner tavern. I need a couple stiff drinks after today's grocery shopping. I had to go to the local chain store. Midtowne Market is 600 miles away.

That's all I'm sayin'

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