

DINING

South Point Grocery opens: What to expect at the new Downtown Memphis grocery store



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Commissioned art installations, retro neon signage and even a giant chandelier made from cooking utensils (yes, you read that correctly) are not design elements you expect at a grocery store.

But South Point Grocery is not your average grocery store.

It's a thoughtfully designed and stocked market that is the newest addition — and perfect complement — to the South Main Arts District neighborhood.

The market at 136 Webster Ave. opened its doors Thursday and will celebrate its official grand opening at 9 a.m. March 10 with a ribbon-cutting.

It's the latest boutique market by Castle Retail Group LLC, the owners of the Cash Saver chain of supermarkets and High Point Grocery.

“After over 40 years in the business, I had done remodels and had opened new stores. But this is the first time I have been able to put all the ideas I have seen and liked over the years into one store,” said Rick James, Castle Retail group owner and CEO.

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What to expect at South Point Grocery

As you peruse the aisles of this neighborhood grocery store, you quickly realize this is more than a corner store.

The store is fully stocked with essentials and specialty items. Easy-to-navigate aisles and state-of-the-art display cases allow this 9,000- square-foot store to offer more than one would expect. Every bit of the space is utilized in a design that doesn't feel cramped.

“This corner display is one of my dad's favorite things in the store,” said Addie James, marketing director for Castle Retail Group and Rick James' daughter, as she pointed to a custom refrigerated display case full of grab-and-go containers of fresh cut fruit. The case wraps all the way around the corner of a wall, using every inch possible.

Name-brand national products sit beside a large selection of locally produced foods.

“We put a call out to local vendors when we were working on this store,” Addie James said. “We thought we knew most from High Point and Cash Saver, but we met so many new ones.”

Local brands like Just in Thyme, Grecian Gourmet, Franco's Italy and Lucchesi's offer a wide selection of take-and-bake fresh and frozen items to take home. Sweets from people like Moore's Truffles, Elise's Dessert Company, Sweet Magnolia Gelato Company, Zio Matto Gelato and Judy Pound Cakes are also available.

The grab-and-go concept runs throughout the store, offering convenience for the busy Downtown customer. Options range from an extensive display of cheeses and charcuterie for quick entertaining to fresh cut fruits for breakfast to freshly made sandwiches for lunch on the go.

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South Point Market's sister neighborhood grocery, High Point Grocery, is known for its meat department. The James family has expanded that department at South Point Market, adding cuts from Como, Mississippi-based farm Home Place Pastures in addition to offering quality certified Angus beef. Other than the shop at the farm, this will be the only retail store in

A deli counter featuring Boar's Head meats and specialty sandwiches is also part of the concept. Josh McLane is the mastermind behind the creative sandwich menu that includes Rick's Reuben (a classic pastrami Reuben that has black olives and a house-made Russian dressing) and The Heels (a surprisingly tasty hot sandwich made with bacon, provolone, hot sauce peanut butter and strawberry roasted jalapeno preserves).

The market also boasts an expansive selection of beers, an amenity that Cash Saver has been known for. With more than 32 feet of refrigerated cases dedicated to beer, the store offers a selection of 400 local, import, craft and domestic beers, said Taylor James, Castle Retail Group vice president of sales.

How it all came together

In 2017, Tom Archer, owner and president of Archer Custom Builders, purchased the empty building at 136 Webster Ave. with the idea that it could bring a grocery store to the South Main area of Downtown Memphis. The 100-year-old building was once home to Liberty Cash Grocers, Inc.

After seeing what Rick James did with High Point Grocery after he bought it in 2020, Archer immediately knew he wanted to partner with him to bring the store to life.

"Tom told his assistant and told him to find this Rick James guy," James joked.

Designing an Arts District market

James hired Cynthia Ham of Cynthia Ham Interior Design to help with the look of the store.

"The first thing she showed me was a photo of her idea for the cooking utensil chandelier," James said. "Every person who has been in the store has taken a photo of it."

The striking centerpiece designed by Ham and fabricated by Bill Andrews of Memphis firm Good Show LLC catches your eye as soon as you enter the store. Andrews also fabricated the pendant lights made from colanders that hang above the deli.

Ham said "an old school urban public market" was the inspiration of the design that artfully combines the history of the building with modern grocery displays.

Retro-inspired neon signs designed by Memphis designer and artist Chuck Mitchell hang throughout the store. Mitchell also created the logo and designed the tile flooring at both entrances to the store

The store also boasts a welcoming front porch with picnic table seating.

“We commissioned three murals for the building,” Ham said. “It feels natural to South Main. This is an arts district after all.”

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Emily Thomas created the art on the corrugated steel wall at the entrance, and Khara Woods created the vinyl “rugs” that adorn the welcoming covered front porch of the store. A mural that runs the length of the East wall of the building will be painted by Carl Moore.

James admits he is grateful for the opportunity to create a store like this, having previously only done large format stores.

“High Point Grocery was kind of the inspiration for this. The great response, the feel of the store and how much the neighborhood appreciates it made us think that this could be a welcome addition to the South Main neighborhood,” said James, adding that offering stores like this in other neighborhoods could be in the future.

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South Point Grocery

Where: 136 Webster Ave.

Hours: 8 a.m.-8 p.m. daily