

BEST APRIL FOOL'S JOKE (read below)



The Journal



New Mariano's at Roundy's With Kroger Co. acquiring the chain for \$800 million

Chicago April 4, 2016; Shoppers new to Mariano's might see the grocery store's swank, upscale touches and think they'll find product prices to match, the chain's namesake said as he walked the aisles of his newest store that has just opened last week. The upscale touches are many, including an oyster bar, crepe station and wine bar, but don't let that scare you, grocery retailing veteran Bob Mariano insists.

The chain has garnered an image as being expensive, he said, but, "If they (shoppers) take the time to walk through, they'll find that's not true," said Mariano, who formerly was the boss at Dominick's Finer Foods.

There might be a few pennies difference on some items, he said, but Mariano — president and chief executive of Milwaukee-based grocery company Roundy's, operator of Mariano's — said the chain remains competitive on prices. He picked up a frozen Roundy's brand margherita pizza and noted the \$5 price, while an ad circular highlights packages of eight hot dog or hamburger buns for a buck, or a 30-ounce container of Roundy's gelato for \$5.



The dessert stop by Oscartek

At the north end of the Orland Park Crossing shopping center, the newest Mariano's, 9504 142nd St., is the chain's fourth in the Southland, and 35th in the Chicago market. The first Mariano's opened in August 2010, in Arlington Heights. The Orland Park store will be open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily.

While prepared food that can be eaten on-site or taken home is no longer a novelty to grocery shoppers, the new Mariano's devotes a significant amount of space in the 73,000-square-foot store to ready-to-eat foods.

It's the first Mariano's to have a crepe station, next to a hot foods area that will serve up items including macaroni and cheese, fried chicken, pasta, mashed potatoes and grilled vegetables. There is also a soup and salad bar, with items including Tuscan bean rosemary salad and brown rice and chick pea salad.

Nearby, Primo stone hearth pizza sells pizzas whole or by the slice, and Todd's BBQ, offers selections such as smoked beef brisket and smoked pulled pork by the sandwich or by the pound. Roundy's last year brought on acclaimed chef Ryan LaRoche to oversee ready-to-eat offerings at all Mariano's locations and develop new products.

On the menu at the store's juice and smoothie bar is the Super Spinach Smoothie, a blend of spinach, cucumber, kiwi, apple, banana, pineapple, strawberries, coconut water and cayenne pepper.

Mariano said the store offers plenty of options for customers to sit, sip and socialize.

"They (customers) can choose the experience they want," he said. "They can sit down and have a cup of coffee and chat."

There are also more potent libations that could make visiting Mariano's to actually pick up groceries an afterthought.

Near the pizza oven and barbecue, a small sit-down sushi bar offers sake and Japanese beer. At one corner of the store is an oyster bar, also serving tap beer, and not far from that is Nob's wine bar, which also has a selection of beer and hard cider on tap, along with a large-screen TV.

There are also cashier stations at all of the food and beverage locations, so a customer picking up food to go can bypass the checkout lanes, Mariano said.

He said he expects that prepared food offerings at grocery outlets will only continue to grow.

"I see a merging" of the two, Mariano said. "The lines are going to continue to blur."

While Orland is the 35th Mariano's, he said that the formula for what should or shouldn't go in a particular store remains fluid.

"We evolve constantly," he said. "We challenge ourselves to ensure we are offering the consumer the best experience possible. Where is the opportunity to surprise the customer when they come in?"

Mariano's has kept up a rapid pace of expansion, opening five stores annually, with a target of 50 in the Chicago area. Four more will open this year, including in Naperville and Westmont, Mariano said.

The first store locally, in Frankfort, opened in March 2013, followed by Oak Lawn in September 2014 and Evergreen Park in February.

For the Orland Park store, village trustees agreed to a sales tax revenue split with Mariano's that would return to the chain a maximum of \$1.45 million over a period of up to 10 years. The agreement covers only sales tax revenue collected under Orland Park's home rule tax rate and doesn't apply to the sales tax money that goes to the state. The agreement is similar to those that Orland Park has approved in the past for new-car dealerships and retailers such as Costco.

Mariano had a long relationship with Dominick's, rising to become the chain's president and chief executive officer. He left the company after Safeway bought Dominick's in 1998, becoming Roundy's CEO in 2002. If you vacation in Wisconsin, it's possible you've stopped for supplies at a Roundy's store, such as Cops or Pick 'n Save.

Safeway closed Dominick's 72 stores in the Chicago market in late 2013 and early 2014, and 11 of those were snapped up by Roundy's and converted to Mariano's locations.

Last month, The Kroger Co. completed its deal to buy Roundy's for about \$800 million, including the assumption of more than \$600 million in Roundy's debt. Cincinnati-based Kroger left the Chicago market in the early 1970s, selling its stores to Dominick's, and before buying Roundy's, its only presence in the Chicago market had been its Food 4 Less stores.

Mariano said he does not expect Kroger will tinker with the formula that has made Mariano's successful, and that the financial heft the new parent brings can only benefit the chain.

"They are going to help us bring it (Mariano's) to another level," he said. "I think it opens up different avenues for us."

April Fools' 2016: The 'best' paper pranks

1 April 2016

April Fool's Day is here again and local newspapers have taken the opportunity to play pranks, hoaxes and practical jokes on their readers.

Here is a selection of the best, and worst, April Fools gags seen today.



Six-storey slide

The glass roof was set to be covered in a strip of super-strength plastic, with safety barriers erected along the edges of the slide.

The National Football Museum resides in a distinctive sloped building in the centre of Manchester. However, thrill-seekers could soon be taking the plunge down the six-storey sloping glass building before landing on a giant crash pad in Exchange Square, writes the Manchester Evening News.

It is billed as the largest "urban slide" of its kind anywhere in the world and a joint venture company La Proof!, a name which may, or may not, be a hint to readers.



King Kong

The Mail reported other sites considered were outside the council house, on Grand Central, near the BT Tower, by the Spaghetti Junction and a return to the Bullring.

Birmingham was once home to a much-lamented statue of King Kong, but the Birmingham Mail writes there could soon be a 100ft-tall replacement directly outside the city's new library.

Proposals for the giant structure - set to become "the Midlands' version of the Angel of the North" - are said to have gone on show.



Football dance off

Liverpool manager Klopp and Everton The footage, shot inside HMV by Joe King shows Klopp and Martinez throw some off-the-wall shapes as they begin to attract attention from customers.

Football fans were shocked to see Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp and Everton boss Roberto Martinez in a dance-off battle at HMV, according to the Liverpool Echo.

A video on the newspaper's website captured the moment high-street shoppers were left looking on in disbelief.



Huge maypole

Streamers are set to be attached to the top of the pole and children from local primary schools are expected to dance around it.

In Swindon, May Day is set to be a magical experience this year with plans for a huge maypole in the centre of the town's "world famous" Magic Roundabout.

The busy island will not be entirely closed to traffic. However, children from local primary schools will still be invited to dance around it holding traditional streamers, the Swindon Advertiser writes.



Under-sand heating

The heating should keep the beach at a constant temperature of between 18-23 degrees Celsius throughout the year.

Gyllyngvase Beach in Falmouth is reported to be having under-sand heating installed to make it an all-year-round holiday destination.

The Falmouth Packet says the pilot scheme begins on 1 April and includes the installation of two large commercial gas boilers, 30 heating outlets and metres of under floor heating pipework installed.



Sheep pig

The crossbreed of a Devon and Cornwall Longwool sheep with a Tamworth pig has been named a 'shig'.

In Cornwall, workers at The Lost Gardens of Heligan say they have managed to crossbreed a Devon and Cornwall Longwool sheep with a Tamworth pig, according to the Cornish Guardian.

The new heritage hybrid is reported to have been named a "Shig" with qualities including being "docile, friendly, with an approachable manner" as well as possessing a woollen coat.



All-weather ice lake

Giant refrigeration units were set to be installed to create a massive ice rink

Stoke-on-Trent's Westport Lake is to be transformed into Europe's first all-weather ice-rink, says the Stoke Sentinel.

After top secret negotiations, the paper reports Nordic refrigeration giant Slushimushi has agreed to freeze the 0.8 mile circumference lake with a small area left free at one side for ducks and other wildlife.



Left-handed sandwich

Gemma Hall is pleased to finally find a left-handed sandwich.

In Bolton, a bakery has announced the launch of a new left-handed sandwich, for those who currently struggle to hold their lunch with sufficient agility.

Gemma Hall told the Bolton News: "As a left handed person myself I'm only too aware of the pitfalls of living in a right-handed world."



10mph zones

Traevellers marked the first anniversary of the 20mph scheme recently with a street party in Stonebridge Park, Eastville

In Bristol, 20mph speed limits are already annoying drivers, but they could soon be forced to drive at just 10mph.

Planners were reported by the Bristol Post to be reviewing next generation road safety options now that all the city's 20mph zones have been phased in.



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