



OUTSIDE  
THE *Vines*

INSPIRATION FROM BEYOND THE POTTING BENCH

# Eat, Shop, Italian

By Lynn Tangorra

Carefully tailored signage encourages shoppers to wander an open floor plan filled with high-quality products at one specialty food store.

Consumers have plenty of dining options in Chicago; a myriad of choices for places to learn how to cook; and an even bigger selection of stores to shop for groceries. But how can a retailer surrounded by competition become a one-stop shop where someone can do it all?

Enter Eataly Chicago where customers can eat Italian cuisine, shop for Italian products and groceries and learn to cook Italian meals all under one scrumptious roof.

Opening its doors in December 2013, the company has since flourished on the concept of welcoming any and all consumers through its doors to enjoy Italian food and drink of the highest quality.

"Our hope is that when people come to any Eataly store they see it as a place where they can eat, shop and learn," says Jason Goldsmith, general manager of Eataly Chicago.

"We really want there to be one experience where each of those elements feeds off of each other."

The concept of Eataly is simple: experience the highest quality of Italian products and food at a price that keeps you from having to travel thousands of miles.

"The idea really with this store was to highlight high-quality food production, high-quality beverages," Goldsmith says. "Obviously the focus is on Italian products, but beyond something being Italian, our focus is on something being the highest quality."

## This Way to Flavor

So much to see, smell, taste and learn. How does anyone find their way around?

"We have a lot going on here, we have a lot of things happening all the time, and we're pretty obsessive about information," Goldsmith says.

"We have signage all over the store."

Signage indeed. There are more than 1,000 product signs located within Eataly, each detailing information about a product's producer, why their product is here, where they're from and how the product is made.

"Our hope is that you discover something new, learn a little something; and then maybe you enjoy it here, or you wind up purchasing something to cook at home for friends and family," Goldsmith says.

Maps of the store are available for customers to navigate their way among the Italian wonderland, but, there's no path here.

"At some retailers you walk in the front door and there's a very clear direction of where they want you to go," Goldsmith explains. "We are the opposite. We want people to come in and explore. We are not going to tell you what direction to go."

## So Much to See

And explore you can. The 63,000-square-foot space is spread out over two floors. Consumers can pick up a traditional Italian sandwich served on handmade bread at the panino station (the Italian word for sandwich) before hopping over to visit the U.S.'s first Nutella bar where crepes and fresh pastries are served; all which pay homage to

the Italian approach of cooking.

The grand bar area on the first floor serves as an anchor where several different elements are rolled into one giant Italian coffee bar, which serves Italian beer, wine, soda and sparkling drinks.

And no Italian experience is complete without gelato. "A good example of putting quality before anything else is there might be incredible milk in Italy, but it wouldn't make any sense for us to bring milk from Italy to make gelato in Chicago," Goldsmith says. "So we use the Italian recipes, we use our Italian know-how, but we use the super high-quality milk that is available in the Midwest."

## Buon Appetito!

Eataly is a place for everybody, even for those who have no idea what a cannoli is.

"We know that there are a lot of products here that people may have not seen before, and we really want people to explore and discover new things on their own," Goldsmith explains.

Customers are encouraged to wander from station to station to find what strikes a chord with their taste buds. At each station, whether it be the wine shop, butcher shop, seafood monger, cheese counter or bakery, an expert is on hand to talk with guests and see what selections suit them best.

A place where you can pair great food with a rewarding experience. Perfetto, no? **LGR**

*Lynn Tangorra is associate editor at Lawn & Garden Retailer. She can be reached at [ltangorra@sgcmail.com](mailto:ltangorra@sgcmail.com).*

