

## **Supermarkets refuse to be superspreaders**

*Adaptation and persistence key to overcome a devastating pandemic*

Derek Futterman | January 12, 2021 | Long Island Herald

As the coronavirus pandemic drags on, South Shore supermarkets are persevering, ensuring they remain committed to serving their customers in the safest ways possible.

Many supermarkets, such as Stop & Shop in Seaford, are offering new ways for customers to shop, inside and outside the store. Even before the pandemic began, grocery stores were exploring alternative ways to enhance the shopping experience. Using modern technology to maximize convenience, they have simplified shopping, and that has meant sales even when their customers don't have time to get to the store.

"Stop & Shop Pickup is something that we had been working on for quite some time and were trying to roll out as quickly as possible," said Stefanie Shuman, external communications manager at Stop & Shop. "When the pandemic hit, people needed convenience more so than normal. We saw home delivery orders going up and pickup becoming more popular."

The program, which operates through stopandshop.com, is contact-free from start to finish, as customers order online and then simply drive up and have their groceries brought to them. "You just pick what hour you'd want to do your pickup, then grocery shop as you would online," said Shuman. "You can enter your GoRewards Number so you can get all of your coupons and discounts just the way you would in-store. Then you pull up to the store during your pick-up hour, call the number on the sign at the spot . . . and [have your groceries] put in your trunk. No contact."

Smaller stores, such as the Original Salpino's of Wantagh, have implemented similar programs, and emphasize the wide selection customers have shopping with their phones. "We have a full butcher's department, full produce, all Boar's Head brand cold cuts, imported Italian specialties, all our homemade sauces," said Paul Barbieri, owner of Salpino's.

For those who can't get to the supermarket, Salpino's offers same-day delivery, a program Barbieri made clear that many customers — especially older ones — appreciate.

"There's no sign-up necessary," he explained. "You just call the morning of. We take your order down and all necessary information. Anything we have in the store is available for delivery."

While larger chains like Stop & Shop also offer delivery, their program differs slightly. Instead of supplying customers with products from its supermarkets, the chain has six warerooms across Long Island dedicated to serving home-delivery customers.

Customers who continue to shop in person, or those hoping to do so sometime soon, are assured that vigorous health and safety protocols are in place. "Our employees are getting tested as often as possible," Barbieri said. "We are also sanitizing our shopping carts and baskets every morning, and the store [is] completely sanitized every night."

Aside from these measures, virtually all stores require customers and employees to wear masks and maintain social distancing, and encourage, at least, one-way traffic down their aisles.

“We take capacity counts very seriously,” said Shuman. “All of our stores, depending on what time you shop, have a counter to ensure that we are not going over any capacity limits, so we keep things safe.”

Asked about the challenges the new year has in store, Barbieri said he believed that Long Islanders could handle them. “I think that 2020 showed us that whatever the world has to throw at us, we’ll adapt to it and eventually overcome it,” he said. “So, whatever 2021 has in store for us, I think we’ll be prepared for it.”