

**2 OCTOBER 2019**

## **POPULAR RESTAURANTS HIT THE SUPERMARKET AISLES**

***Coles unveils first-ever food hall with independent restaurants and biggest fresh convenience range yet***

Coles has opened its first-ever food hall today at its Tooronga Village store, featuring one of Melbourne's favourite cafés and Australia's leading sushi retailer as part of an ongoing transformation to make Coles a destination for convenience and health-focused shopping.

The refurbished supermarket provides a convenient destination for premium quality and fresh meal solutions to inspire customers and help them to live healthier, happier lives.

In line with Coles' strategy to innovate through partnerships, Coles has banded together with Melbourne husband and wife duo Simon O'Regan and Jackie Middleton to bring their popular CBD-based café EARL Canteen to Tooronga, to cater to increasing consumer demand for healthier meal solutions.

Joining EARL at Coles Tooronga is Australia's largest and most loved sushi brand Sushi Sushi, which will serve up fresh sushi and hot meals for customers on the go.

Not only is the Tooronga supermarket the first Coles in the country with independent restaurants in store, it now also boasts the largest range of convenience food options for time-poor customers with over 450 lines including Coles' expanded range of Fresh Kitchen salads, ready-to-go breakfasts, pre-cut fruit and veg, and homestyle-inspired ready-made meals.

Located next to Coles' national store support centre in Melbourne's east, the innovative food destination highlights Coles' customer-first culture, featuring innovations that have already proven popular in customer trials including a dedicated Cheese Shop with upmarket local and international cheeses, a DIY bread slicer, cook-at-home pizza ingredient station and fresh pasta bar.

Underlining Coles' commitment to providing the best value food and drink solutions to make customers' lives easier, First Choice Liquor Market has also opened its newest store right next door, featuring an open-plan layout and new store concepts including a tasting bar for sampling and exclusive in-store events for customers.

Coles Head of Convenience Louis Eggar said, "Our new food hall concept is all about making life easier for our customers by solving the problem of what to eat – for everyone, any time of the day.

"At Coles, we want to win together with our suppliers, so we're excited to work with the best in the business for premium quality, quick and easy meal solutions that appeal to our urban and time-poor customers in Hawthorn East and surrounds.

"We're also delighted to work with a small family business like EARL Canteen and support them as they grow their business, expand their workforce and reach a larger network of foodies for the first time outside the Melbourne CBD."

As a result of the multimillion-dollar transformation of the Tooronga Village supermarket, Coles has created more than 65 new local jobs including 25 new staff members employed by EARL Canteen and Sushi Sushi.

EARL's expert team will be onsite in the open-plan kitchen every day from 7am to 8pm preparing freshly made sandwiches, salads, sweets, made-to-order breakfasts and 'Wholebowls' – hot food bowls exclusive to Coles. EARL's locally roasted, barista-made coffee will also be available in store.

EARL co-founder Jackie Middleton said, "EARL is excited to redesign and expand our Wholebowl range to offer more than 30 possible combinations of delicious hot food options for all tastes. We know EARL regulars and new customers alike will love the flexibility. We think this concept is a game-changer – as is excellent coffee inside a supermarket. We're not sure which Melburnians will love more."

Rubbing shoulders with the EARL team is the newest location for Sushi Sushi, which will feature new and innovative varieties of 'seaweed-less' sushi and their popular 'sushi sandwiches' alongside hot Japanese favourites and pre-packaged sushi.

Sushi Sushi General Manager for Commercial Partnerships Gavan Meadows said, "Sushi Sushi and Coles have created a 'store in store' concept like no other, featuring all the famous Sushi Sushi products Australians have grown to love and trust made fresh each day onsite for Coles customers.

"We believe this partnership represents strong brand alignment and our core business values being constant innovation, great customer experience and a premium product offering. We look forward to a strong and mutually beneficial partnership moving forward."

Coles' strategic investment in tailoring supermarkets to local communities will see more than 100 existing Coles stores converted to the new Fresh Convenience format before Christmas.

Just next door to Coles Tooronga, the newest First Choice Liquor Market store has a strong focus on delivering value to customers with a range of top-quality products from award winning suppliers, as well as the growing trend to premiumisation including dedicated zones in the store focused on Champagne, Malt Whisky and Craft Beer.

The store has been optimised for online retail with a dedicated Click&Collect bay for customers to pick up orders quickly.

First Choice Liquor Market opened its first store in Ringwood in 2016 and now has 38 stores across Australia. Coles plans to convert an additional seven First Choice stores to the First Choice Liquor Market format before Christmas.

Coles at Stockland Tooronga Village Shopping Centre and will be open from 7am to 10pm, seven days a week. First Choice Liquor Market will be open from 9am to 9pm Monday to Saturday, and 10am to 8pm on Sunday.

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