

# Business

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Jeff Ruppenthal/SUNDAY NEWS

Grocers Kharran Cattell, left, and Cheryl Young stand outside Expressly Local, 213 W. King St.

## Fresh face on King St.

Expressly Local grocery set to open later this month

By JON RUTTER  
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Expressly Local isn't your grandpa's grocery.

And yet it is, kind of.

"It's sort of new-fashioned and old-fashioned," Eugene Aleci said. "I really think this is the future of food."

Aleci, a well-known Lancaster architect and preservationist, owns the venerable 213 W. King St. building that

will house the store.

Kharran Cattell and Cheryl Young are the grocers.

The doors are scheduled to open in late October, said Cattell, who was supervising the installation of a shiny new sink last week.

She and Young know whereof they eat.

Their company, Expressly Local Food, is an established delivery service with sources throughout Lancaster and nearby counties.

The enterprise has a couple of hundred regular customers, according to Young; public sales outlets include Eastern Market and the Lititz Farmer's Market, not to mention Cattell's front porch on Race Street.

The women are now taking their business model a step further by bringing wholesome, affordable local food downtown, seven days a week.

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## Grocery: Dry goods as well

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But the store will peddle more than just eats.

A full line of dry goods will be offered, including environmentally friendly cleaning supplies and, yes, Young said, green toilet paper.

Drop into Expressly Local, Cattell said, and "you literally would be hard pressed to have to go to the supermarket."

### Expressing themselves

Aleci, who bought the 1870s-vintage building last year from the estate of William H. Beittel, redeveloped the storefront and is leasing it to the women.

He'll have only to stroll a few steps to procure free-range eggs and raw milk.

His Community Heritage Partners business shares the back of the building with Not Bad Design and other tenants.

A restaurant might one day go into the old Caribbean Breeze slot next door, at 217-219 W. King St., Aleci said.

The high-ceilinged residential chambers that fill the three stories above the grocery are little altered since the gas-lamp era and could become condos.

"What happens up here is sort of gravy," added Aleci during a tour of the building. All focus now is on floor one.

The space previously accommodated the Central Baptist Church and, before that, a thrift shop.

Aleci said the Beittel family occupied the site and operated a "racket store" — selling a little of everything — before closing the business in 1959.

Now, fresh yellow paint brightens the inside walls, and the maple floorboards gleam under new finish.

Young and Cattell have been slugging away at refinishing the oak trim framing the big, south-facing display windows.

An Aleci-designed counter built by an Amish craftsman and capped with a steel countertop was scheduled to be added this week.

It isn't surprising that Cattell and Young have come to this.

Despite many differences, they said, they're both independent, artistic sorts who happen to love all things culinary.

"Kharran and I are food nuts," acknowledged Young, 65, who moved to Lancaster 10 years ago after working as a human resources consultant in Chicago.

The 50-year-old Cattell said she grew up near Franklin & Marshall College, cooking on a coal stove.

The women ticked off a partial inventory of their grocery food and suppliers:

Rhode Island Red poultry from southern Lancaster County Amish farms. Raw milk from Fertile Valley Farm in Myerstown. Raw milk cheese from Wakefield Dairies. Yogurt from Pequea Valley Farm in Ronks.

Factor in, naturally, a cornucopia of meats, herbs, potatoes and seasonal fruits and vegetables.

The grocery will go strong on gluten-free products and guard against processed items, refined sugar, excess salt and corn syrup.

Still, Cattell said, "We're not a health-food store."

Candy and pecan pie are in the offing.

"I'm a jelly addict," admitted Young, who said she helped compile their long list of suppliers by "hunting and gathering" along southeast Pennsylvania roads.

Shelf-stable items such as beans, rice and spices will be supplied through Abundant Earth Co-Op, the women added.

While the foods will not necessarily be certified organic, Cattell said, they will be produced in a traditional, organic manner.

"It's whole food," Cattell added. "You're not supposed to take stuff [such as fat] out of milk."

Nor will Expressly Local foodstuffs be lugged 1,500 miles, the average distance between American fields and plates.

That's unsustainable, said Young, who counts factory farms and the industrialized agricultural system as "the enemy."

"We never could compete with Perdue," she added. "We're never going to offer you 79-cents-a-pound chicken. But we're cheaper than natural-food stores."

The women don't expect to compete much with farmers markets, either — they say they're frequently going to be offering different products.

According to Young, local farmer participation in markets has diminished over the years because it's unreasonable to expect busy farmers to spend several days a week staffing a stand.

That's where she and her Prius come in.

Even after the grocery opens, she said, she'll still pick up about 40 percent of the food from her sources. (The rest will be delivered.)

Cattell, who works as a courier, described the grocery as a collaborative, family project that will enlist the help of her husband, among others.

She added that she expects Expressly Local to expand on its bread-and-butter clientele — people who consciously eat with an eye to personal and environmental well-being — by drawing new customers from the neighborhood and downtown.

The idea would not have been viable five years ago, Aleci said.

But farm-direct food has gone mainstream here.

And Lancaster's Buy Fresh Buy Local campaign — coordinated by Aleci's wife, Linda — is likely to boost momentum, he added.

Ironically, said Young, who is of Pennsylvania Dutch descent, her culture's signature diet is "probably the root of all bad eating habits" in America.

On the other hand, she reasoned, "If you can't eat locally and healthfully in Lancaster, where can you?" ■