

Grocery list

Writer Julie Lemerond shopped 'til she dropped to find out which places offer the best prices, service and experience for city shoppers

• THE STORES •

- ✓ Pick'n Save Metro Market
1123 N. Van Buren St.
- ✓ East Side Pick 'n Save
605 E. Lyon St.
- ✓ Sendik's
2643 N. Downer Ave.
- ✓ Jewel-Osco
1100 E. Garfield Ave.
- ✓ Outpost Natural Foods
2826 S. Kinnickinnic Ave.



Writer Julie Lemerond cruises the aisles in our top-rated store: Pick'n Save Metro Market.

In recent years, grocery shopping in Milwaukee has evolved from a must-do chore to an event that is a feast for the senses. From gourmet samples to organic products to wider aisles (vs. playing bumper carts), consumers are now demanding a well-rounded shopping experience in their food stores. But low prices and good quality are still the forefront of shoppers' minds.

◦ The shopping experience ◦

Did you feel better leaving the store than you did entering it? Was it hard to find simple items? Were the employees helpful in guiding you through the store? Was the store clean and appealing? What about the number of options available, from produce to frozen foods? These are the questions I asked myself when I embarked on this grocery mission. Here's how your favorite store measured up:

Pick'n Save Metro Market: The Metro Market came with top marks in all of these categories. The employees are extremely helpful and went out of their way to help when I asked basic questions. I was often asked if I was finding everything all right, without having to go out of my way to find someone. Colorful and impressive store maps are available at the end of every other aisle, and I actually

felt classy in my sweatpants as my ears were massaged with classic big band music in the background. The amber walls are warm and inviting, and with most of the aisles separated from the noisier cash register area, it is easy to get lost in the Metro Market — in grocery la-la land. Not to mention they offer the best selection of the stores on our list.

Pick'n Save (East Side): Pick'n Save was a stark contrast to the puppy love I had just fallen into at the Metro Market, but they did prepare me before I entered, with a sign telling of the renovation they were undergoing. The employees were extremely nice, and several went out of their way to say hello or see if I was finding everything OK. Relaxing and soothing classical piano music filtered through the speakers, but there was often overstock sitting in boxes at the end of aisles, which gave a cluttered and messy look and feeling to the store. Again, it is only fair to reiterate that they were under construction. The biggest thing that bothered me, though, is when I used the restroom in the back stocking area, I saw an employee's open water bottle sitting on top of hot dog buns that were waiting to be put out on the shelves.

Jewel-Osco: At Jewel-Osco, the produce department did have a nice selection of herbs and they offered a good selection of cheeses, but the meat department smelled like fish, which I did not find at any of the other stores. On a positive note, there were TVs located throughout the store that gave cooking tips, or offered suggestions on how to allergy-proof your home. When I asked for assistance, an employee was very helpful, but I had to go out of my way to search for him. A further annoyance was the soft-rock music in the background constantly being interrupted by employees calling for help over the intercom. The nice thing about Jewel-Osco is it is a one-stop shop; other than groceries, they offer a pharmacy, photo shop, an office section, greeting cards, electronics ... the list goes on.

Sendik's: Sendik's on Downer has been a staple of East Side produce lovers for decades. It proved itself to be one of the best places to go for upscale and/or organic produce, cheeses, fantastic deli selections and excellent seafood options. The dry goods selections are limited, but they more than compensate with produce and meats, and they also offer a healthy jam and honey selection. I found the employees to be helpful, but the store is small and it's easy to feel crowded when just one other person is in an aisle with you. An added bonus is the fantastic floral shop.

Outpost Natural Foods: Finally, Outpost in Bay View is the newest grocery store catering to Milwaukee's urban dwellers. The store is a co-op, meaning it is community-owned. The prices are a bit higher, but nearly all the food is organic, and some of it is locally grown. They do offer "Owner Bonus Buys" on rotating selections, but you must

be an owner to get the deals. The neat thing about Outpost is the education that you are offered as you go through the store. Numerous pamphlets are available for the taking, describing different oils, grains, legumes and rice. There are also brochures describing vitamins and minerals, vegetarian or vegan recipes and alternatives to sugar.

◦ Picky about produce ◦

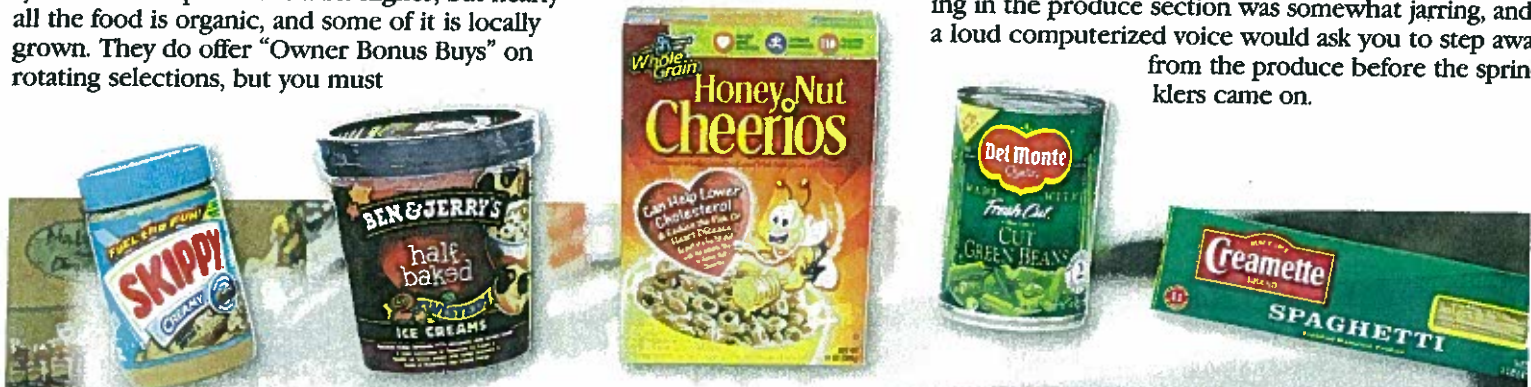
The Metro Market rated superb for produce, offering more selections than the other stores in our survey. Fancy fruits such as starfruit, clementines, kiwi, real sugar cane, and purple and white pepino melons graced the shelves, and the vegetables and herb selections were extremely plentiful too.

Outpost gets high votes for produce as well, offering all organic selections, some from local farmers, and also pamphlets describing what vitamins and minerals different fruits and vegetables provide.

Sendik's has an excellent produce selection, long hailed as one of Milwaukee's best spots to go for fruits and vegetables. More types of melons were offered here than at other stores, and they had a nice selection of fresh herbs and spices as well.

Pick'n Save's produce section could use some improving. They offered the basics, and the quality looked good, but watermelons were lined up on the floor along the walls, which was both unattractive and unsanitary.

Jewel-Osco had a good amount of herbs, a nice variety of greens and a decent fruit selection, but the track lighting in the produce section was somewhat jarring, and a loud computerized voice would ask you to step away from the produce before the sprinklers came on.



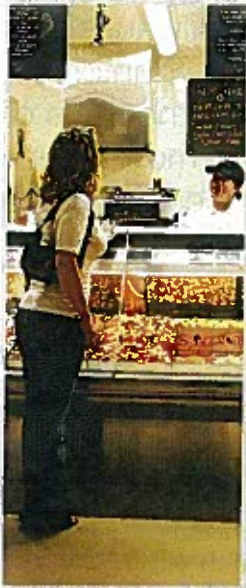
	Creamy Skippy 18 oz. jar	Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream/Pint	Honey Nut Cheerios 14 oz. box	Del Monte Cut Green Beans, 14 oz. can	Creamette Spaghetti 1 lb. box
Metro Market	\$2.15	\$3.55 or 2/\$5 (w/card)	\$3.79	\$.99	\$1.15
Pick'n Save	\$2.15	\$3.55 or 2/\$5 (w/card)	\$3.79	\$.99	\$1.15
Jewel-Osco	\$2.29	\$3.99 or 2/\$5 (w/card)	\$3.69	\$.99	\$1.19 or 5/\$4 (w/card)
Sendik's	\$2.19	\$3.69	\$3.93	\$1.05	\$1.19 (only DaVinci brand)
Outpost (Natural style only)	\$2.79	\$3.39	\$3.89	\$1.19	\$1.19

Price police

Where are consumers going to get the best deal? Any store that is part of the Pick'n Save family will usually offer the most bang for your buck, which includes the Metro Market. Jewel-Osco fell in the middle, and Sendik's and Outpost were at times a bit pricier than the competition.

TOP of the LIST

What's the best pick for city shoppers? Scale of 1 to 5 (1 = lowest, 5 = highest)



	Cleanliness	Attractiveness	Ease of Finding Items	Friendliness of Staff	Overall Experience
Metro Market	5	5	5	5	5
Outpost	5	5	4	4	4.5
Sendik's	4	4	4	5	4
Pick'n Save	3	3	4	5	3.5
Jewel-Osco	3	3	3	4	3

“It is easy to get lost in the Metro Market — in grocery la-la land.”



◦ Bakery break-down ◦

Sendik's offered wonderful and varied bakery selections; most of them are brought in from local bakeries, such as Immas, Alterra, Suzy's and Wild Flour, while a handful of breads are made on-site.

Outpost has good (and unique) bakery offerings, with many healthy options not available in regular stores, such as homemade chewy granola bars and Banana Flax bread.


Jewel-Osco's bakery had potential, but looked like it could use some attention. Some of the stock was sparse, but then again, maybe it was just sold out already for the day.

Metro Market gets high marks for its bakery, offering breads, muffins, cookies, and fun and trendy seasonal cakes. Bonus points, too, for always having someone offering you a taste-test.

Pick'n Save's bakery department was seriously under construction, but they will surely improve with the renovation. ❌

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