

A real showstopper

GLORIOSO'S ITALIAN MARKET, A MILWAUKEE INSTITUTION, MOVED TO A NEW SPACE WHILE STAYING TRUE TO ITS ROOTS.

BY Kim Ann Zimmermann

Some people view supermarkets as theaters for food. In the case of Milwaukee-based Glorioso's Italian Market, the supermarket literally was a theater.

The Glorioso family had operated the Italian market on Brady Street for more than 64 years. It was founded by three Glorioso brothers—Joe, Eddie and Teddy—who are now in their 80s but still involved in the business.

In 2009, the family discovered that the Astor Theater, which was just across the street, was up for sale. The 20,000-square-foot theater offered an opportunity for a major expansion from their 3,100-square-foot store. After much debate, the family decided to buy the building and move the business across the road.

"When customers became aware that we were going to move, they were excited about the idea of a bigger store with a greater selection, but on a daily basis people were also telling me, 'I'm going to miss this store,'" says Michael Glorioso, co-manager and Teddy's son. "The challenge was to still keep the charm and atmosphere of the old store in our new location."

The family hired Sussex, Wis.-based Mehmert Store Services to turn the 1907 theater into a new "old" store. "As you can imagine, the challenges of a project like this are many, including the fact that the building the market was looking to move into was listed on the city's historical register," says Dan Prah, project manager.

He says the Gloriosos wanted to create a memorable space that would help them accomplish their sales goals. Specifically they wanted to expand their grocery, wine and spirits departments. They also wanted the store to be a destination for Italian and domestic specialty cheeses.

Beyond these goals, they recognized the need to create a foodservice operation within their grocery function. A full-service kitchen,



pizza kitchen, rotisserie chicken, meat market and a coffee/bakery area would all eventually become a part of the design.

The service counter was designed to be a 70-foot long serpentine adventure in Italian culinary delights. Another 72 feet of low and mid profile cases were used for their signature cheese department.

The building hadn't been used as a theater for some time, Prah says, and a second floor had been added over the years. "Removing a portion of the second floor and the suspended plaster ceiling above it created a new, soaring space," he adds.

Demolition and removal of the second floor exposed interior brick walls and heavy structural steel beams, which inspired some of the design themes. Period-correct harp lights and double-hung windows helped to create an interior

cityscape of Brady Street.

"The removal of the second floor gave us that 'wow' factor," Glorioso says. "Mehmert really just nailed what we were looking to do."

While the market has held on to its original charisma, it didn't hold on to its equipment. The Gloriosos opted for an energy-efficient energy rack from Zero Zone, Inc., based in North Prairie, Wis. The refrigeration rack is tied into a heat recovery unit from Madison, Wis.-based Therma-Stor LLC. Heat that is reclaimed from the refrigeration rack pre-heats the store's water.

A hood control system manages the four hoods within the space. The self-monitoring system determines fan speed based on the equipment that is operating at the time. LED can and track lighting is used in the service deli and for accent lighting in wine and liquor.

The finishing touches included some vintage signs and old photography of the store and the neighborhood. "It really reflects the Italian roots of our neighborhood and our business," Glorioso says. "We really hit a home run." □

