

CITY CENTER AT OYSTER POINT



PHOTO BY KENNETH SILVER/DAILY PRESS

Signs of progress

City Center is at the corner of Jefferson Avenue and Thimble Shoals Boulevard in Newport News.

Italian market to bring spice

Ceriello Fine Foods will sell prime beef, fresh mozzarella and sauces at Oyster Point.

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When small chain Ceriello Fine Foods was looking to expand south of its New York area base, it made the unusual decision to choose a spot in a new mixed-use development in Newport News.

The developers of City Center at Oyster Point scored a coup by landing Ceriello's Fine Foods, which was founded as a Long Island Italian specialty food market in 1973 by Andrea Ceriello. The company has 14 stores, including two in New Jersey, one in Milwaukee and one in Baltimore.

Ceriello's is one of many retailers and restaurants slated to open at City Center next spring. But the market also brings something different — a place where the future residents of the development can buy fresh meat and other food for cooking.



Ceriello's is known for its prime aged beef. The company also makes its own sauces for meats and salads. PHOTO COURTESY OF CERIELLO FINE FOODS

"Newport News kind of found us, and they thought we would be a good marriage," said Ceriello, who speaks with an Italian accent and still answers the phone in New York himself.

This is actually the second food market to sign on for City

Center. Medik's Market, in Hampton, is moving over to the City Center. In addition to soup and sandwiches, Medik's sells gourmet and organic products and pre-made meals.

"They're going to complement each other well," said Eva Wiggins, marketing direc-

tor at Harvey Lindsay, the developer of City Center.

A consultant hired by Lindsay that specializes in getting unique stores knew Ceriello and recruited him. Ceriello checked out the demographics and economy in Hampton Roads and liked what he saw — his prime audience of baby boomers who will spend a little more for good, fresh food.

"You have a lot of retirees from the army that stay in the area," said Ceriello. "We are looking for locations within an hour flying and eight hours of driving."

Ceriello's has a bottling plant where it packs its homemade pasta sauces, which start with tomatoes imported from the San Marzano region of Italy. The range of sauces include everything from basil, vodka and clams to prosciutto. Ceriello also makes a wide variety of its own sauces for meats and salads.

Ceriello is known for its prime aged beef — a category the company said only includes 2 percent of the beef sold in the United States. The

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Company slated to open next spring

beef is placed into controlled refrigerated units at the store for 30 days to age and loses up to 15 percent of its weight.

The enzymes in the beef break down to make it more tender and give it a distinct flavor. It's about 35 to 60 percent more expensive than regular beef.

The butcher shop also sells seven types of homemade Italian sausage, lamb, pork and some poultry.

The company also imports Italian goods like chocolate, bal-

samic vinegar, espresso, biscotti and cookies.

It will sell some food made on-site like Panini, lasagna, pasta with prosciutto and peas, and roasted stuffed eggplant. Fresh mozzarella will be made on-site.

When Ceriello came down to see City Center, he was sold that this was a great place to sell.

"I said it looked like a vacation all year 'round," said Ceriello. "The ownership and management team of this complex are fabulous people." ■