

Kroger Co. Gobbles Up Murray's Cheese

Supermarket giant acquires New York cheese store chain and its Greenwich Village flagship store

By Keiko Morris and Heather Haddon – February 7, 2017



Supermarket giant Kroger Co. has purchased Murray's Cheese, a 77-year-old purveyor of specialty foods, the companies said Tuesday.

Kroger purchased the retail condo at 254 Bleecker St. that houses Murray's flagship store, classrooms and catering and event operations for \$20.6 million late last month, according to city records.

For Kroger, Murray's offers the mainstream grocer the opportunity to attract a more rarefied customer base -- something that Kroger Chief Executive Rodney McMullen has expressed an interest in.

Established in 1940, Murray's, which has about 200 employees, has a location in Grand Central Terminal in addition to its Bleecker Street store, a Greenwich Village restaurant and shipping and

e-commerce operations in Long Island City. Competition has become fierce in food retail.

Distinguishing supermarkets through specialty items can help boost foot traffic from shoppers who might be siphoned off by online food retailers, convenience stores or mass merchants, said Jim Hertel, senior vice president of the William Bishop food consultancy.

But Murray's should remain vigilant about preserving its artisanal brand, said Arlene Spiegel, a restaurant and retail consultant and president of Arlene Spiegel & Associates.

"Several craft soda brands have been purchased by large companies and sold through mainstream distribution channels," Ms. Spiegel said. "These brands have better market penetration but lost their luster." ●