

Ancona's Market thinks green in Connecticut

Ancona's Market in Ridgefield, Conn., features sustainable design and practices, such as polished cement floors and reusable cloth shopping bags. *It recently cut its electricity use by 20% by adding night shades to its open refrigerated cases*



Working Together

Ancona's Market
Est. 1920

Third-generation grocer committed to green awareness

By Susan Tuz
STAFF WRITER

Updated: 06/09/2009 09:01:52 PM EDT



RIDGEFIELD -- Joe Ancona is a third-generation grocer who has embraced green technology and eco-friendly store design.

Founded by his grandfather, Joseph Ancona Sr., Ancona's Market on Route 102 in Ridgefield has entered the 21st century in layout and product offerings.

Ancona grew up in the business, and after earning a bachelor's degree in architecture and master's of business administration degree, he returned to the market three years ago. His architectural training is in sustainable supply and environmentally friendly designs that are community and socially responsible. His personal interest is in natural foods that promote a healthy lifestyle.

From re-usable cloth grocery bags to polished cement floors -- which don't require the stripping and waxing with toxic chemicals that vinyl floor tiles do -- Ancona has made the market environmentally friendly.

He and his uncle, John Ancona, are in the market every day. "My father was stepping back a bit from the day-to-day of the store, which led my uncle, John (Ancona) and I to sit down and talk about how we'd proceed with upgrading the market," Joe Ancona said. "It needed a lot of renovations."

By adding Econofrost night shades to all the open-faced refrigerators in the store, Ancona was able to cut electric consumption by 20 percent. "Given that our electric bill is about \$18,000 a month, that's a good savings," he said. "For our meat case, with the night shade, the refrigeration is better, which increases the shelf life of our meats."

Ancona's Market now purchases much of its seasonal produce from The Hickories, a family-run, third-generation farm in Ridgefield. In the fall, the market will be selling Ridgefield-grown, grass-fed, hormone- and antibiotic-free beef. "By buying locally, you're supporting area businesses and think of all the transportation expense and effect that's saved when your spinach comes down the street rather than across country," Ancona said.

The market continues to expand its organic products and offers lines of food that are allergen-free. Ancona hired an executive chef to create prepared offerings. "That has put us at better-than-restaurant quality and at better prices," Ancona said. "We've expanded our prepared food line, preparing all the dishes in-house, assuring there are no preservatives, keeping an eye on salt content and using nutritionally good oils."

Jeanne Wyland, of Redding, drives the added distance to Ancona's Market for her weekly family shopping. "I love this place," Wyland said, as she selected bananas in the produce section of the market recently. "I like the neighborhood-market feel and the organic lines they offer. I have a 10-year-old son and like feeding organic to my family."

The Anconas "do all the things a third-generation business should do in supporting the community," Joe Ancona said, "and having myself and other members of the family here, we can keep an eye on things, assuring business is done with quality."