

Store Equipment & DESIGN

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CHICAGO, IL

Metro Marquis awaits
spring with a
European flair



French Connection

Quebec store recreates essence
of outdoor markets

When spring finally arrives in Quebec, the full design of the Metro Marché Marquis store will come into bloom for the first time.

Grapevines will grow up the earth tone, stucco exterior walls of the new 32,000-square-foot store. And apple trees positioned near windows and the walkway from the parking lot will offer blossoms and, it is hoped, fruit in season.

"When the apple trees blossom in spring, we'll have specials and festivals in that area," explained Jean-Paul Boudreau, the Montreal architect who designed the store in Repentigny, Quebec — 45 minutes north of Montreal — for owners Maryline and Jean-Paul Marquis.

Boudreau's design, nominated for a Canadian architecture award, was inspired by the outdoor markets in Montreal that are surrounded by separate specialty stores.

Metro Marché Marquis is not a "big box." Instead foodservice departments — fashioned after the specialty shops — are grouped around the store's perimeter surrounding the central core of standard grocery racking.

Boudreau's outdoor street atmosphere is evident at first glance inside the store. A canvas canopy slopes down toward the produce area with small halogen lamps suspended from the ceiling — the architect's image of starlight.

Separate offerings of the store are distinguished by walls or graphic elements. The seafood section, for example, is situated under a dropped ceiling in an alcove but is easily recognized with a large mural of whales. The blue colors of the mural are carried through the department.

In addition, there are specialty shops for pizza and pasta, a Monsieur Felix & Mr. Norton fresh-baked cookie shop (a well-known Canadian brand) and a sushi shop slated for this year.

In a coffee roasting stand near the checkouts, customers can create their own coffee or tea blends and the store will keep their specific recipes on hand.

The Italian-made roaster, the beans and even the employee on hand are part of a \$14,200 (\$20,000 Can.) turnkey system from Montreal-based Comptoirs du Sud, Inc.

A key element to this Metro Marché Marquis, one of 12 stores in the family-owned chain, is the attached bakery, patisserie and pâté shop. Like a European shop with seating for 40 people against a

glass wall, cases display more than 25 types of pastries and more than a dozen types of pâté. All natural breads are baked in a wood-fired Spanish oven.

The efforts that make this store distinct have a lot to do with the market, according to co-owner Jean-Paul Marquis. Two competitors are in the same area and "there's little difference in pricing so service is the distinction." Marquis contends the 'big boxes' offer little variety to attract the area's middle- and upper-income customers.

Marquis expects sales of \$10.65 million (\$15 million Can.) in the first year ending in September and, since he believes this new area is fairly saturated by retail, he doesn't expect a large profit immediately.

—by Gary S. Ruderman, editor