



FOUNDERS MARKET



# Founders Market Play Book- 2026

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## MORE THAN A GROCERY STORE

Great grocery stores mean more to us than just our putting groceries into a cart. We get offered a chance to sit down with an espresso or cup of joe made from coffee beans locally roasted, or find our number one cookie fresh out of the oven. Maybe it's a Saturday afternoon, our shopping's done, and we hear a local musician playing to a group of people outside on the patio and we get lured into lingering. We are a new generation of consumers. We're choosing to engage more in our favorite environments. We've come to expect more, and look for experiences that add to the quality of our daily lives. Truth is we don't really find it most the time. But when we do, we delight in it.

Founders Market can give you these experiences. We know every community has a need for meeting and belonging, and different places have attracted us in different ways. A neighborhood grocery store can be right up there with the post office and the elementary school's play yard. We believe we are part of the glue that holds us all together. When you shop Founders, think of us as going out of our way to give you a sweet spot all your own. The butcher slides a recipe across the meat case to put in your pocket. Tonight's dinner gets handed to you by a young server from behind the deli counter, hot and abundant, in a compostable container to take home. An Adirondack chair outside offers you enough time to slow down and breathe. Founders is full of these moments.

We add our light to the sum of light, Tolstoy once said. He may not have been thinking of Founders Market, but if he had, he would have made it mean what's organic, natural, sustainable, healthy, and enlightened for our lives. Our goal is to make shopping more than just a chore. It's to make it worthwhile.





## THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY COMMUNITY GROCER

Adding prestige to grocery shelves used to mean choosing national products. Now it's the other way round. It's the local's turn. Founders Market will actively promote local community food entrepreneurs. Roberta Mae's pies may not make it onto our shelves, but her honey mustard will. Corralitos Brewing Company's West Coast Double Pale Ale might likely be found in a refrigerated case, or Marianne's Chocolate Ripple Ice Cream sold in the freezer aisle. So we say – let's forget trickledown economics. For us, it's time to give locals their due.

But it's not just about the amazing products we will carry. It's about the involvement we will seek, promoting and sponsoring events such as Sunday morning farmers markets, or organic health and vendor fairs, educational programs, outreach for seniors, Script, Maker's Mart, cooking classes, and Pop Ups, or whatever comes from our ongoing listening to the community and its needs.

We plan for creating a social media presence that contributes knowledge and wisdom to an increasingly on-line audience. We shall work to safeguard and protect the environment through how and what way we buy. Our employees will be able to personally volunteer for community work, having release days paid by Founders. And we will have donation days at 10% of gross sales.

Certainly, creating jobs for the community has always been the most obvious way any business could add value to the local economy. It still is. But there's also a higher goal for us now – providing our employees sustainable, living wages with a needed selection of benefits and incentives for a quality of life that is at the core of our business. We seek the greater good, giving something we call *heart* back to both our employees and customers, as well as to the community we belong to.



## GIVING GREAT SERVICE

*“We have customers who still share stories of the times we went the extra mile for them ten or fifteen years ago.” - Ari Weinzweig*

A beautiful store with handsome interiors, good looking products, and great energy around the store’s perimeter flow of “shops” is no small achievement. Retailers strive to make this happen. But all of that pales when a customer is ignored or callously mistreated. A customer needs more than a passing smile, or a robot’s response, or a muted employee. They need to be cared for, and their needs appreciated. They need to be treated like close friends and good neighbors.

Service is the number one thing we remember. It makes the customer’s experience more than just another passing moment in their day. Giving great service becomes a memorable event we talk about for a long time to come. “Remember when Aunt Peg came back from the store with a smile that lasted half the day?” Someone took the time to help her find what she needed, and later walked her out to her car, and made her laugh along the way. *It’s that kind of thing.*

The same level of exceptional care and support we give to our customers we seek to provide to our own employees. We honor the work they do, treating each of the roles our employees engage in with respect. We invest in our employee’s desire to grow with us with long term plans of advancing them into leadership roles. We reward giving great service that comes from our employees by giving each of them above average compensation and bonuses that are clear acknowledgements of their merit. In the years to come, we want each of our neighborhoods to remember our commitment and care for both employees and customers alike!

*“We are ultimately at home in the world not through dominating or explaining or appreciating, but through caring and being cared for.”  
- Milton Mayeroff*

## COMMUNITY DESERTS VS COMMUNITY HUBS



For far too long there's been a wasteland of aisles and cheap products in big box stores surrounded by a sea of asphalt and cars. We have come to expect run-of-the-mill architecture and lifeless retail in stores providing only a modicum of service. This is after years of national and corporate brands coming into our communities and killing off independent, locally owned stores. These environments take something away from us. No one gathers and no one lingers in such places. These kinds of retail locations are what we name community deserts.

We call ourselves Founders because we believe in returning to the original experience of the marketplace. We reject the current paradigm of big box stores and strip malls. Our size is friendly and welcoming. We craft quality into the store's design and décor. We offer customers a place they're proud to claim as one of their own community hubs. And in giving exceptional service to everyone, we believe we're part of a much larger vision of caring for community, not taking it away for the bottom dollar. We seek to outshine others by caring more about everything, and by adding back what has been lost –

*a true sense of place.*

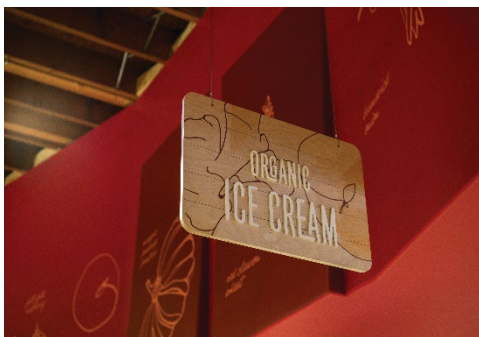


## STORE DESIGN

We've developed our grocery store designs for over twenty-five years. We've worked with architects, graphic artists, lighting designers, and custom fixture and millwork manufacturers in concert with our in-house expertise. We've worked with all of them as a varied group of artisans for our store designs. Think of it as smarter together, or one creative idea deserves another. Choosing a new direction for each store's design is a process we honor and respect because each community is different and unique.

Nothing is cookie cutter about our stores. Nothing's ordinary about our look. Let's just say that there's more to designing a store than signage telling you where to find the chips and beer, more to lighting than strips of white light glaring down onto a sea of products, and more to a building's structure than ceiling tile fifteen feet off the floor reminding you of your last visit to the doctor's office or the pharmacy down the road.

We give respect to all things creative and original in our design strategy, steering clear of big box corporate uniformity. We value a high degree of authenticity that provides innovative food shopping venues. Most retail stores are monochromatic and static as far as color goes. Founders bases its color palette on the rich hues of the French Impressionists, and the vibrant tones of a summer's day.



We seek to breathe life into our stores, creating integrity with the materials we use – custom light fixtures, handmade tile, reclaimed lumber, bare aggregate concrete, even murals hand painted by a local artist. Our goal is fresh, sophisticated palettes fashioned by artists for the sheer pleasure of the customer when they walk through the front door for the first time.

## BISTRO DELI



*“You don’t have to cook fancy or complicated masterpieces, just good food from fresh ingredients.” – Julia Child*

Our definition of Bistro is the combination of great value and home style excellence with simple, familiar, delicious food. There are featured entrees and sides for choosing your own meal. There are prepared soups and salads and sandwiches ready to be ordered. You can grab a picnic item or dinner entrée to take home from the Home-Prepared Deli Line-Up. We cook it. You eat it. Fresh, earthy fare from a contemporary menu. It’s the kind of gourmet meant for everybody.



## FARM TO MARKET PRODUCE



Dirt farmers often have small crops and high prices. But they have great product. And they take pride in what they grow. I'm sure you have seen that smile – it can blister the paint off the side of a tall barn. The exceptional value a local farmer adds by being close to home does not have to be expensive. We want to offer great value and great prices from these farms that gives our customers the same smile as theirs. We call it pride of possession -- caring for where it comes from -- straight out of the dirt to you.



## INSIDE OUT



Depending on where our stores find a home, there might be a patio or sidewalk outside for sitting down. There might even be a converted Airstream serving beverages. If you pick up a made-to-order sandwich from inside the store, you could also walk outside and place an order for any drink listed on the chalk board, and end up getting a glass of zin, or a local IPA, or maybe one of Founder's own Smoothies. But more importantly, you're outside. It's a beautiful day. There's a table and chair just for you. You trick your dog into resting at your feet, and feast on the moment. This is good as it gets. Right here. Right now. Founders Market. Come and see.





# FOUNDERS MARKET

*Seek the Good. Give the Best.*

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