

Vince's steps up online shopping experience

When the pandemic struck, Vince's responded quickly with their own home delivery and store pickup services. This was well received by their customers ? many of them older ? who were worried about the possible risks of in-person shopping.

Turnaround times were good, but the small independent grocer knew they could do even better. Vince's is now stepping up the service by partnering with one of the leading online grocery platforms in North America.

Instacart is already working with some of the largest retailers in Canada, but Vince's is their first smaller, regional grocer with multiple locations.

?Our customers are going to get a best-in-class e-commerce platform,? said Vince's partner Giancarlo Trimarchi. ?That is something we were unable to do on our own.?

The technology is cutting-edge, with Instacart's in-store shoppers able to communicate in real time with customers. While the shopper is picking items, they can react instantly if something is out of stock or requires a substitution, or if they need clarification on the size or ripeness of produce. By texting through the app, they can resolve these issues with their client and adjust the order as needed.

It is all part of the Instacart service, enabling same-day delivery ? often in less than five hours.

Delivery radius is approximately a 30-minute drive from each Vince's location, and customers can confirm they are within it by entering their postal code in the app. Typically, the Instacart shopper will visit the closest store, and then deliver direct to home. ?From start to finish, it is roughly the same timeframe as doing your own shopping,? added Trimarchi.

An added benefit of picking items in-store, rather than at a large central warehouse, is that online customers enjoy Vince's attentiveness to freshness, no matter the product.

?We rotate everything in our 'fresh' departments daily,? said Trimarchi. ?We bake fresh every day. In our deli, meats are still being sliced to order, not pre sliced. Overall, the customer is receiving the same experience ? and quality ? as if they were shopping themselves.?

Because Vince's is known for fresh foods, these are all available on Instacart ? along with a wide selection of products they normally carry. ?We're updating that list every week to keep it fresh as well,? Trimarchi continued. ?So as items come in and out of season, we ensure that our Instacart store reflects that.?

This applies to core produce items that are always in stock ? for example apples from Washington and New Zealand. These are usually available year-round because of their growing season. ?But as soon as we have the first-of-the-season Ontario Macs, they will be available online.?

Fees depend on Instacart's driving distance and promotional offers (when available). Depending on the size of the order it can be as low as \$5 or in the \$10-\$15 range. Check their website for pricing details.

?Because we're small, we are able to micromanage our offering to make sure we are giving customers what they want,? said Trimarchi. ?That applies as much online as it does in-store.?