



## Convenience Curated for Diverse Lifestyles

Northwestern University's Plum Market caters to those with food allergies and dietary preferences By Danielle Romano

### At a Glance

#### Plum Market

**Operator:** Compass Group

**Location:** Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill.

**Unique features:** Healthful, chef-crafted recipes made from scratch; a selection of natural, organic and specialty snacks and beverages for on the go; sophisticated environment

**AS COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY** campuses across the nation amp up their “convenience” offerings, Northwestern University’s Plum Market is going a step further. The store aims to accommodate a range of food allergies and dietary lifestyle choices by providing students and staff with a mix of natural, organic and specialty products housed in a sophisticated environment.

In an effort to meet the needs of its increasingly diverse population, Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., and its new campus foodservice provider, Compass Group PLC, welcomed Plum Market as one of several new initiatives focused on inclusive dining options.

Plum Market is a privately owned, Michigan-based company that currently operates five full-service grocery stores and 10 quick-service, small-format Plum Market Kitchen locations across the Detroit and Ann Arbor, Mich., metropolitan area, as well as Chicago.

Located inside Lisa’s Café in the university’s Slivka Hall, the Plum Market at Northwestern boasts the slogan, “Live Well, with Taste.” The shop is often referred to as a “mini Whole Foods.”

“Plum Market’s signature level of guest service and selection sets us apart from

other retailers. Plum Market focuses on healthful, chef-crafted recipes that are made from scratch, and we’ve curated a great selection of natural and organic snacks and drinks for on the go,” explained Sarah Levesque, sustainability manager, Compass Group, at Northwestern University.

#### Curated Offers

Plum Market began welcoming students, faculty and staff on Oct. 1.

The space is modern and inviting for students to study or relax. Levesque noted that warm lighting makes it a comfortable atmosphere, perfect for students and staff to sit and enjoy their breakfast, lunch, dinner or even late-night meals.

According to the sustainability manager, what differentiates the 3,000-square-foot Plum Market from a traditional convenience store is its customized menu with items that are tailored to fit the needs of those who have food allergies or follow specific dietary lifestyles.

“The biggest difference at Plum Market is our commitment to quality; from the peak-of-season ingredients used in our recipes prepared on-site, to the natural and locally crafted products we retail,” Levesque told *Convenience Store News*.



Made-from-scratch prepared foods are a cornerstone of Northwestern University's Plum Market.

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Focusing on the best natural and organic options, Plum Market offers signature sandwiches, fresh salads, fresh baked goods, as well as natural packaged snacks like Greek yogurts and chips.

Grab-and-go breakfast and lunch items are popular with students as they need

something quick, filling and nutrient-dense to keep them fueled between classes, Levesque noted.

Plum Market attempts to cover the basics, while also taking notice of what students love. Some of the most popular packaged snacks and menu items among students are breakfast sandwiches, all-natural chicken tenders and fries, craft ice cream pints from brands like Cool Haus and Ben & Jerry's, Alo Water, and spicy snacks like Barbara's Jalapeno Cheese Puffs.

Additional features of Plum Market are:

- An Intelligentsia coffee bar featuring freshly brewed coffees and other drinks;
- Free Wi-Fi and ample places to plug in; and
- Residence hall essentials such as paper products, health and beauty care items, and cleaning products.

Open every day until 3 a.m., Northwestern University's Plum Market is currently tracking more than 500 transactions per day, exceeding initial expectations.

“Northwestern University has really embraced the Plum Market concept, especially the prepared hot-food offerings like the breakfast sandwiches and the late-night options,” said Levesque. “Plum Market enhanced the residential space (Slivka Hall) by bringing students healthful food essentials and amenities they need.” **CSN**