



Come in for a wide variety of “grab and go” breakfast and lunch options at Spar Park Square and Superspar Umhlanga. You can even take home a nutritious meal for the whole family prepared by our resident professional chefs.

# SPAR PARK SQUARE

## Fasten your seatbelt for good health

It is anticipated that in a few years the restaurant industry is going to lose about 8% of its business to supermarket fresh food takeaways. This phenomenon called Home Meal Replacement (HMR) looks like it is going to take a bigger piece of that pie, sooner than expected. **And Spar Park Square is leading the charge.**

Owner Mark Anderson and partners (sons Travis and Kyle and manager Chris Von Allemann) have taken the retail world by storm. They’ve transformed Umhlanga Superspar into one of the finest examples of modern retail in KZN, if not the country. Park Square Spar builds on that vision and success with its own unique take on the ‘shopping experience’ spearheading an evolution in the industry. Attention to detail, world class hygiene standards and endless choices of fresh, healthy food offerings are the hallmarks of these exciting and visionary retailers.

All sauces are prepared from scratch by our chefs

Fresh produce is selected daily for use in our dishes

Our butchery is so hygienic you can eat off the floor

Your health is our main concern and we go out of our way to find the healthiest ingredients



Open daily 7am to 7pm

EAT  
GOOD  
FOOD



WE DID IT  
**OUR WAY**

TEXT & IMAGES: NICHOLAS CARROLL

*Everything that you can eat in a Spar store has an expiry date and the countdown to its final demise starts the moment the stock arrives at the back door.*

Being a Spar owner involves living outside of your comfort zone for the rest of your working life. You never sleep quite as well as those who trade in hardware, plastics, clothing and metals, for example. Your mission, if you choose to accept it is to sustain the quality of all living things in your life to the best of your ability. There is no corporate safety net, no bottomless bank account to tide you over until things come back on track.

The cut and thrust of the retail business involve getting things done through and with people. Like it or not, you have to give your staff lots of good reasons to come to work every day. And if they forget those reasons, you simply remind them again, until it starts to hurt. Then you remind them some more. If they're lacklustre in any way, it's your fault for not inspiring them.

Who wakes up one glorious morning and declares: "I am going to be a retailer"? Life and circumstances steer us to these places. Unless of course you are born into a family retail business and get to watch your parents trying to get a grip on themselves, let alone the people they've employed. Ten years ago 2L Coca-Cola was one of the fastest-selling items in supermarkets around the country. Before distributors ABI introduced slightly reasonable terms, if you didn't pay COD, you didn't get your Coke. Think your way out of that one when your cash has already been allocated to wages and infrastructure - and imagine the date is 24th December. Swapping war stories has nothing on re-tails.

**COMMITMENT IS ABOUT ONE'S OBLIGATION WHILE DEDICATION IS ABOUT ONE'S PASSION IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THE OBLIGATION.**

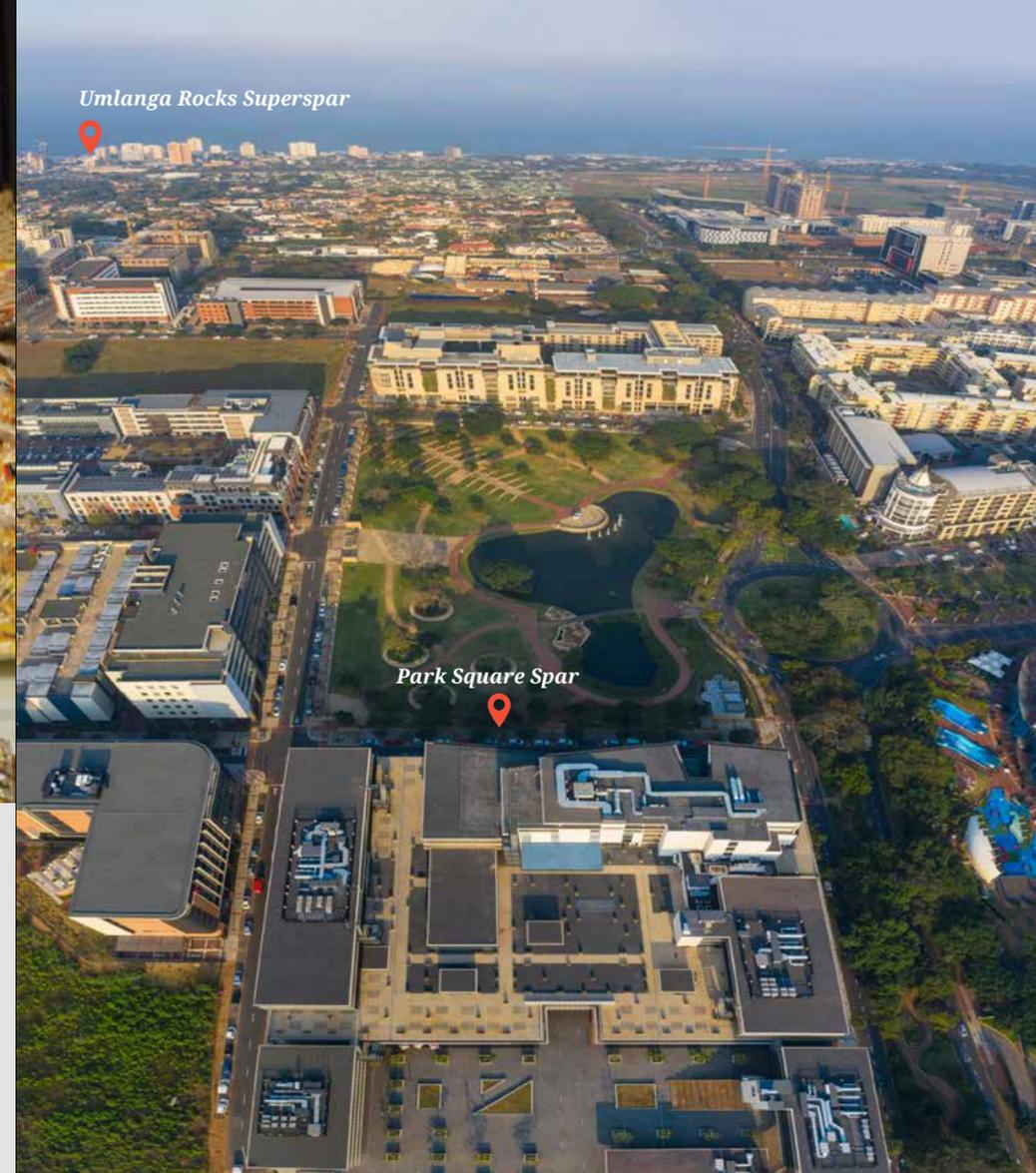
So what makes the kids stick around in the business? Mastering the product and people side is just one small part of what it takes to make it in this sector. By "make it" we mean working out how to get things done with and through people without screaming and shouting (anymore)! We all have needs and life throws a constant barrage of curveballs of all shapes and sizes. You've asked people to join you on your incredible journey - their trials and tribulations become yours and vice versa.

We asked one of Mark Anderson's staff if they thought he was OCD. How else do imbue the essence of perfection and quality into everything around you? The alarmed look in her eyes was hilarious, but her gaze quickly narrowed and we are told "You know what, I think he is. Yep, and you need to be quite OCD to deliver this level of fresh and healthy food in a store with 1000's of products, day in and day out". Do you remember Kim's game? A Boy Scout exercise designed to develop observation and memory skills - several objects are set down in front of you for a moment and then covered up. The test is to accurately recall what you saw.

The mind of a retailer is an exceptional example of observation and recall. Every time they walk down an aisle, the retailer's brain builds up layers of memory for every product, every gap, and every curved line that should be straight. To the point where a physical map of the store becomes permanently embedded. And any change to the map sets off instant alarm bells.

A medium-sized Spar store carries over 8000 products (or SKU's - stock keeping units), you can multiply that by at least 6 because that's usually the minimum amount of each SKU in stock at any one time. A seasoned retailer will probably be able to talk you through all 8000, top to bottom, left to right.

Aircon systems, fridges, freezers, and ovens are all designed to eventually ask for help. They tend to break down at the most inconvenient times - just as you've locked the doors for the night. The morning fridge and freezer checks are carried out by hand feeling for the 'curtain' of cold air that acts as a



barrier to the store air. No airflow, and warm products are met with a silent scream and a loud \$@&%\*\*@!. Most savvy retailers are refrigeration experts, even a shift in a defrost cycle smell can signal a problem.

So why do family members follow in Dad's and Mom's footsteps? The multi-faceted layers of the business, immense depths at which the detail resides, the unpredictability of life, equipment challenges and the imminent death of everything edible should turn the lights off in any self-respecting applicant.

**MAYBE THE REAL REWARD IS CUSTOMER SATISFACTION. MAKING THEM HAPPY TO THE DEGREE THAT THEY COME BACK TOMORROW AND THE DAY AFTER THAT.**

Satisfaction is the pleasure derived from the fulfilment of one's wishes. And if your wish is to impart satisfaction and see it mirrored back at you every day through the return of your customers, that's possibly an excellent reason to live permanently outside of your comfort zone. N'est-ce pas?

Owning a Spar store means taking full responsibility for everything that happens on your watch, which could extend

over decades. It means that you are superman until someone else takes the joystick. What can you expect from a life like this? The answer is that you can expect everything. Where else do you build the stamina and mental tenacity to endure through extraordinary circumstances? Tough is nothing when you are pouring emotional support into the lives of those around you, leaving the thinnest smidgen for yourself. Waves of relentless demand will batter you until you personally set the impossible standards mark. Because if you don't, we'll pick up the lag in your dedication and find our sustenance elsewhere.

Suspended from the ceiling at the entrance to Park Square Spar is a life-sized Saab 1945 WW11 airplane. Aeronautics will have us understand that when a craft reaches a certain speed, air flowing over and under the wings create lift and it leaves the ground as if aided by an invisible hand. We still marvel at the phenomenon of flight. But when you break it down, it makes a lot of sense: Release the brake and accelerate down the runway at speed so that when you've reached the point of no safe return, the only way is up. It seems to us that Mark Anderson has reached the optimal speed for an invisible force to thrust him upward into a realm where there is irrefutable proof that living outside of your comfort zone is the only way to gain lift. Where the depletion of your emotional state is necessary to give a lift to others. And you'll get it all back in ways yet to be understood.