

NZ

RETAIL

OCTOBER / NOVEMBER
WWW.THEREGISTERS



VISIONARIES

*Lessons from the best in the
New Zealand retail business*

GO WEST

*Inside Auckland's
newest mall.*

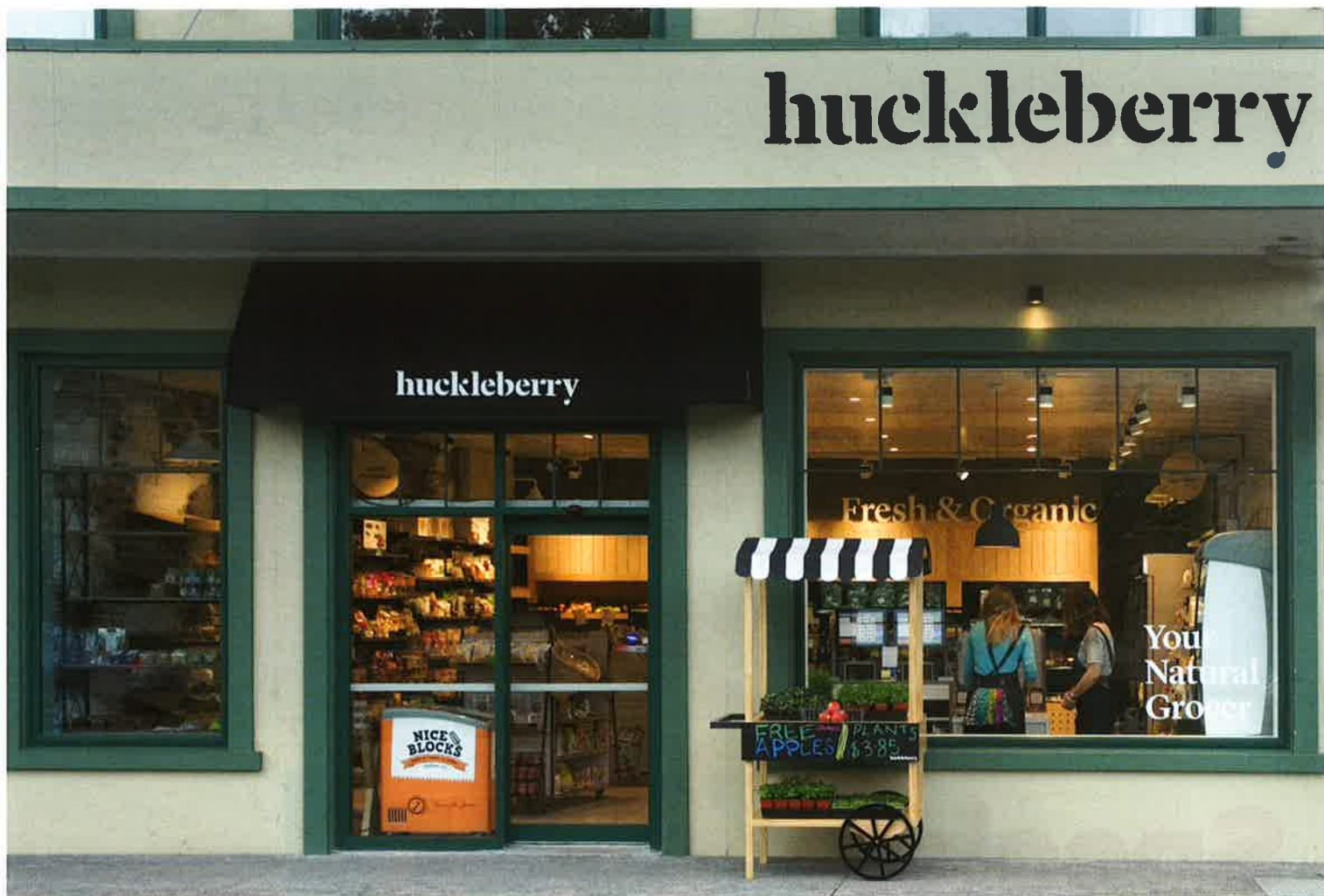
FIT FOR PURPOSE

*Industry advice on
retail fit-outs.*

\$11.90



9 415006 102145



The modern grocer

Huckleberry Farms wants more shoppers to go au naturel with their food choices. The company, which specialises in organic food, has launched a new series of stores called Huckleberry which bring back the local corner store to the neighbourhood, reports Elly Strang.

In the days before supermarkets, shoppers would buy their fruit, cheese, fish and other essentials from a vendor with a food cart at the local market.

That experience has been replaced by large-scale grocery stores in the present day, but the local corner store is experiencing a revival.

Small, boutique food stores like Farro Fresh and Nosh are popping up in local catchments and

enticing customers with a bigger range of premium products.

Based on their expansion - Nosh now has eight stores around New Zealand, while Farro Fresh has three in Auckland - customers are taking to them like bees to honey.

Huckleberry Farms is keen to tap into this, but with the organic sector.

The company was founded in the early 1990s to create an outlet for natural, organic food.

It already has two shops by the same name and a Hardy's Wholefoods in Grey Lynn.

Huckleberry Farms chief operating officer Richard Lees says the time was right to expand its store offering and bring organic food to the masses.

"It was through a lot of thought and understanding [that] there's an opportunity in the market for organics to become



Above
Inside the Mt Eden store.

more mainstream. Wellness and wellbeing is starting to become more prevalent," Lees says.

"There was a good opportunity to refresh the brand, and to do different retailing methods and concepts."

There's definitely a growing demand. In 2012, the New Zealand organic sector reached between \$340 million and \$360 million in value.

This represents a 25 percent increase in the three years since 2009 - a rapid increase in the midst of an economic recession.

Lees says organic products are now getting more recognition from consumers.

"It's becoming less fringe and people are very much more aware of the effects of pesticides and herbicides and more interested in their wellbeing," Lees says.

Commercial design and fit out company Spaceworks was brought on board to design the

new series of Huckleberry stores. Spaceworks spent about four to five weeks preparing to do the fit-out, and then four weeks onsite at the Mount Eden store.

The main difference between the new Huckleberry stores and the previous Huckleberry Farm and Hardy's Wholefoods stores is the layout and size of them.

The Mt Eden store is 80 square metres, while the Milford store is a cosy 75 square metres.

Lees says Huckleberry Farms didn't want the new stores to be big or intimidating. "We wanted it to be a local feel. We aren't after big stores, we want smaller footprints in communities that are very localised, more experience-based and accessible," he says.

Lees says Huckleberry wanted the store to look friendly, as well as clean and comfortable.

Materials such as timber and

brick were used to create a warm, natural environment that wasn't sterile, as well as a neutral backdrop for the products to "pop" on.

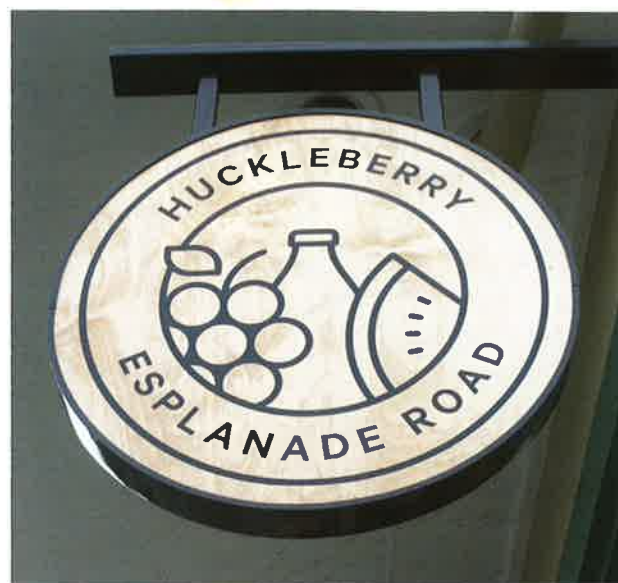
Spaceworks managing director Lizzi Hines says the design brief was to make organic food accessible, as well as dispel the myth about it being expensive.

The store is designed to be more of a curated corner store than a large scale, product-packed grocery shop. Unlike a supermarket, which usually has tall shelves stacked with products, products are displayed on an angle on shelves.

This gives products on the top and bottom shelves better visibility, Hines says.

It also helps customers see and interact with staff from anywhere within the store.

Hines says fresh produce was placed further into the store rather than at the usual spot at the front



"It was through a lot of thought and understanding [that] there's an opportunity in the market for organics to become more mainstream. Wellness and wellbeing is starting to become more prevalent."

to avoid it being squashed in customers' baskets.

Woven baskets are used for placing shopping in as a natural alternative to plastic ones.

The store also doesn't have any aisles, while the counter is placed relatively close to the front.

Hines says this is because not everyone wants to weave through a series of aisles to reach the product they want, or the till.

Spaceworks also recommended Huckleberry merchandise produce by recipes, rather than by product type. This is because customers are looking for little things that make life easier, Hines says.

"I think in the world of convenience, people want to know how to do something," she says.

"I'm not a cook so I'd rather go somewhere and have someone help me in terms of suggestions for what I can cook that night – it's the whole My Food Bag idea."

Outside the store sits an old-fashioned food cart, while the black and white awning over the door creates a boutique feel.

The cart will occasionally have free apples and other produce for passers by.

As the exterior for Huckleberry stores won't always be the same, Hines says the cart and the canopy above the door are the features that will always be outside.

The new Huckleberry design is also reflected on the company's website and its branding.

Lees says the upgrade has made the brand modern and timeless.

"It keeps the essence of Huckleberry Farms - the ethics and everything behind the business remain the same. We just made it a more accessible brand."

Hines says the new Huckleberry stores are a refreshing approach to the food business. The company is really thinking about what the customer wants with product offerings, price points and the overall shopping experience, she says.

"I think sometimes organic can be highly overpriced or a bit rough and ready. What we've done is create something that's in the

middle and appeals to the middle market," she says.

The result is a fresh take on the traditional food shopping experience, tucked right in the heart of several Auckland neighbourhoods.

Lees says customers' reactions to the stores have been the highlight.

"We've had many customers come into the new stores and just really enjoy the feeling of it, as they feel so comfortable," Lees says.

The Huckleberry Milford store and Mt Eden store are now open and in October, two more stores will open on Auckland's North Shore. **R**

New Lights now on display

Contemporary to traditional lighting on display, ideal for commercial fit outs.

We make the process of selecting the right lighting options easier.

77 Carlton Gore Rd,
Newmarket Auckland 1023
alphalighting.co.nz

ALPHA
LIGHTING
SHOWROOM