

## Earth Fare opens in the Shoppes at St. Johns Parkway

The organic and natural foods grocer already operates two stores in Jacksonville.

By Dan Macdonald

October 16, 2019



Earth Fare opened its third grocery store in Northeast Florida Wednesday morning in St. Johns County.

The 24,000-square-foot store at 120 Shops Blvd. in the Shoppes at St. Johns Parkway center off County Road 210 West is the 15th Earth Fare in Florida and the 55th in the chain.

It is the third in Northeast Florida. The first is in Atlantic North and the second is in Mandarin.

Earth Fare started in 1975 in Asheville, North Carolina.

The St. Johns County store employs 98 people, with about half working full-time.

Earth Fare is a full-service grocery store that specializes in organic, natural, chemical- and antibiotic-free food.

Frank Scorpiniti, Earth Fare president and CEO, said the store “reads the labels so you don’t have to.”

Besides Florida, Earth Fare has stores in North Carolina, Virginia, Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, Tennessee, South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama.

Earth Fare opened at the Shoppes at St. Johns Parkway in St. Johns County. It is the company’s third grocery store in Northeast Florida.

The store’s “Food Philosophy” is painted on walls in several places in the store.

It promises that food sold at Earth Fare is free of added hormones, antibiotics, artificial fats and trans-fats, high fructose corn syrup, artificial sweeteners, artificial preservatives, bleached or bromated flour and artificial colors or flavors.

This pledge is backed up with its “Boot List” of chemicals that will not be found in the store.

If an employee finds a product containing a chemical on the Boot List in the store, the product immediately is removed, and the employee receives a \$50 reward.

“If the food philosophy is our constitution, the Boot List codifies it,” Scorpiniti said.

The new store was more than three years in the making. Earth Fare’s real estate division was made aware of the property, owned by commercial developer Tony Sleiman, after building Jacksonville’s first Earth Fare on Atlantic Boulevard at another Sleiman property.

Earth Fare has experienced 20% growth in each of the past two years. Another 15 stores are in development in Florida, but none are in Northeast Florida.

Located across the street from a Publix, Scorpiniti is aware that his stores must be price competitive.

“A couple of misconceptions are that we don’t have everything you need and that you’ll spend more money,” he said.

A price example Scorpiniti cited was the store’s baguettes that are made three times a day using organically grown, non-GMO flour.

At Earth Fare they cost \$1.29 where at other stores a baguette made with chemically treated flour could cost at least \$1 more.

The “Weekly Meal Planner” offers daily suggestions on how a family of four can eat a healthy dinner for about \$70 a week.

There are daily discounts on items like pizza slices, quiche, chicken wings, roasted chickens and sandwiches.

The store has a full meat and fish department, bakery, sushi station, and a juice and smoothie bar.

It offers takeout food, including a hot soup bar. If customers prefer, they can eat in the store’s free Wi-Fi-equipped cafe.