

# Gourmet

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## GOOD LIVING FRESH

### COLLABORATION

### THE PEOPLE'S CHEESE

A deal struck between Kroger, one of the largest supermarket chains in the U.S., and Murray's Cheese, an artisanal shop in New York City's Greenwich Village, has been ripening since the summer of 2004. Now properly aged, Murray's outposts have opened in three of Kroger's 2,476 stores. Previously, the supermarket's cheese section was full of "prepackaged, hermetically sealed cheese," says Liz Thorpe, Murray's vice president. In the three inaugural Murray's in Krogers in the Cincinnati area, wheels of Parmigiano-Reggiano and baskets of cave-aged Gruyère sell for less than the pre-cut stuff. "It's not about being fancy or snobby," says Thorpe. "It's about getting better, fresher cheese into people's mouths." Murray's sets and refines the product list; Kroger buys from an Atlanta distributor. Murray's teaches product knowledge, customer service, and technical skills like cutting, wrapping, and presenting (Thorpe herself trained more than 30 employees—store supervisors, perishables managers, cheese stewards—in advanced *fromagerie*); Kroger manages employees and allows them to dress in Murray's reds. In the future, the partners will evaluate the success of their relationship. A decision to stay together would mean more Murray's outposts in more Krogers across the country. In other words, it could be the start of a beautiful friendship. —Sara Pepitone

