



Kingdom Come

Successful retailing is all about relationships. When local legend Emma O'Brien announced last year that after 20 years she was stepping back from the running of Holly's Gala, Moyvane, Co. Kerry, it was important that the store fell into the right hands. Enter Terry Dunne, operator of three other Gala outlets in the Kingdom, to ensure that the store's loyal customers are catered for as well as they always have been – and then some.

"I was very conscious of the standing that Emma has in the community and how important

Checkout pays a visit to Co. Kerry, to meet Terry Dunne, a well-known local retailer that has just taken over one of the group's best-loved outlets, in the village of Moyvane.

the store is to the people that shop here," Dunne explains. "It was very important to continue the good work that had been done previously; why would you change a winning formula? The day of the opening, Emma was there to cut the tape."

Successful Formula

Dunne is a progressive retailer, however, operating successful

Gala outlets in Gneeveguilla and Killarney, and understood the need to maintain a successful formula, yet also bring some new ideas to the table. Launched with much fanfare in April – the store welcomed Kerry stars Marc and Darragh O'Sé to the village for the opening – the new-look Holly's has undergone some cosmetic changes, which Dunne believes makes it a more pleasant place to shop. "We've upgraded

the look and feel of the shop, and pulled back the shelving a little bit to give it more breathing space. We brought in a new fruit and veg unit, and we're getting an off-licence at the end of the year."

Added-Value Concepts

At Holly's, it's the little things that make all the difference. While the store is located directly opposite a school, which ensures a steady footfall, Moyvane boasts a large elderly population, and the shelves in the store are all at shoulder height to enable ease of purchase. In addition, one of the key attractions of the store is the



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Terry Dunne

Holly's Gala, Moyvane, Co. Kerry



New Approach Above and Top: The store has reformatted its bakery and fruit and veg displays, with an off-licence to follow soon. Opposite page: Former owner Emma O'Brien with Terry Dunne, proprietor, and Kerry footballers Marc and Darragh Ó Sé, at the opening of the store.

addition of the Bakers Corner concept, which Dunne says has transformed the business.

"Scratch bakery now accounts for 5% of our turnover, from a standing start," he explains. "I'm a firm believer that every three to five years, a store needs to add an extra emphasis to its offering, and Bakers Corner has given us that. We have brought in a couple of extra staff, including a woman that ran her own bakery in Listowel, so the quality is excellent. We wouldn't have been able to do it without the support from Gala. It's really given us an extra edge."

Similarly, the rollout of Gala's chilled distribution model has

been a game-changer for the store, particularly due to its location. "We used to be at the mercy of the delivery drivers, and how frequently they decided to make their deliveries," says Dunne. "Chilled distribution has enabled us to make huge savings; the van is here two or three times a week, and it's enabled us to widen our product offering. Ordering is very easy as well. I think that as the chilled distribution gets stronger, we'll get stronger as a business."

Local Competition

From the door of the shop, it's only 11 kilometres to Listowel, a town that boasts a large SuperValu, an Aldi and a Lidl, so Dunne also understands the need to offer a strong value proposition. Working with Gala head office and local Gala wholesaler Peter Clifford, the store has been able to offer competitive offers on a par or

better than what's on offer in larger stores. "Working with Cliffords has enabled us to compete with bigger stores," he says. "There's a perception out there that if you're small, you're not able to be competitive, but I'd be told very quickly by customers if I wasn't."

The store offers a range of 12 to 15 products on promotion all year round, including staples such as sugar and corn flakes, which has helped both maintain its loyal customer base and attract new shoppers. "If you're a small shop in Moyvane, people are going to shop elsewhere, of course they are," says Dunne. "But if they felt my pricing was out of line, they wouldn't keep coming back. We're up 10% in sales since this time last year."

A lifelong independent retailer, Dunne believes that his relationship with Gala enables the store's "own individuality to shine through", with the support services there to complement his own efforts. The group's sponsorship of Special Olympics Team Ireland has "gone down very well" with the local population, while the Bakers Corner concept, which has led to increased employment in the area, is fast becoming a local institution. "When we took over, there was 11 people employed, and now there's 14. If a factory opened up down the road that employed 14 people, it would be big news," Dunne says proudly.

While she's no longer behind the till, we suspect Emma would approve as well. ■