Alumna's grocery store is a locavore's delight

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Simone Reggie (MBA '12), right, is the founder of Simone's Market, a neighborhood grocery store that showcases local and regionally sourced food as well as prepared foods by executive chef Ashley Roussel, left.

You can tell from the moment you walk in the door that Simone's Market isn't like most grocery stores.

There are no shrink-wrapped tomatoes or signs promoting national brands. Instead, you're greeted by produce cases proudly describing the provenance of their contents — satsumas from Belle Chasse, carrots and beets from Tangipahoa Parish, lettuce from Amite, baby kale and arugula from Folsom. Look further and you'll find shelves lined with Louisiana-made jellies, salsas, snacks and sodas. In the back are refrigerator cases filled with ready-to-go meals made from ingredients like free-

range chickens and grass-fed beef from New Iberia.

The brainchild of Freeman School alumna Simone Reggie (MBA ’12), Simone’s Market is an old-fashioned neighborhood grocery store with a special emphasis on local and regionally sourced food. While the store features more than just local items — customers can always find pantry staples and non-indigenous essentials like avocados, bananas and spinach — Reggie takes special pride in showcasing the region’s growing number of farmers and artisanal food producers.

“If it’s available locally,” Reggie says, “we totally carry it.”

The intersection of food and business has always been an important part of Reggie’s life. Her family operated a popular restaurant in her hometown of Lafayette when she was growing up, and later, as a Freeman School MBA student, she worked with the John Besh Foundation to create a microloan program to help local farmers bring their products to market.

After graduating, she co-founded Cleaver & Co., an artisan whole animal butcher shop, and served as producer lead at grocery delivery service Good Eggs, where she helped to curate the company’s New Orleans site with local products.

When Good Eggs shut down its New Orleans operation in 2015, Reggie was determined to keep working with the farmers and artisan food makers she’d built relationships with at Good Eggs. Just as she began to mull the idea of opening a small grocery store, she got a call from her friend A.J. Brooks (MBA ’12), developer of the Catahoula Hotel, asking if she was interested in partnering to open a grocery store in a space next to the hotel. That space ultimately didn’t work out, but Reggie, Brooks and partner Jason Brown kept looking and eventually settled on a former Woolworth’s location in the heart of the Oak Street commercial corridor.

Since opening in January 2017, Simone’s Market has attracted a dedicated following of regulars who enjoy the luxury of a neighborhood grocery store as well as the convenience of restaurant-quality prepared foods. Executive Chef Ashley Roussel’s menu includes sandwiches, take-home meals like lamb neck shepherd’s pie and grass-fed meatloaf with mashed potatoes, and signature dishes like Gouda mac and cheese and Scotch egg — a soft-boiled farm egg encased in sausage, coated with panko and deep fried.

But don’t let the fancy prepared foods and artisanal products fool you. While they might conjure up images of another market, one often associated with spending your whole paycheck, Reggie says value-minded shoppers can still support local farmers and food makers without breaking the bank.

“The other night I made a piece of drum, a huge salad and sliced sautéed vegetables — a full meal for two people — and I spent about $20 on ingredients,” Reggie says. “If you shop for basic ingredients, it’s super affordable.”