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Story Highlights

- Jacksonville's Southside sees major international grocery expansion with recent openings.
- Ethnic foods market projected to double from \$33.7 billion to \$68.9 billion by 2035.
- Jacksonville's Asian population of 62,000 drives demand for specialty international grocers.

Throughout Jacksonville and across the country, there has been ongoing excitement and demand for global flavors and cuisines.

While embraced by an audience best described as "culinary

curious," that interest is also being driven by an expanding multicultural population. Widespread exposure to global culinary trends on social media, especially among younger audiences, is also contributing significantly.

While Southeast Asian cuisines have become especially popular, particularly Korean foods such as kimchi, Korean fried chicken, sriracha, bulgogi and bibimbap, foods and ingredients from other parts of the world are also attracting attention.

Apart from international specialty stores catering to the latest global food trends, many longtime operators have been serving Jacksonville's multicultural communities for years. That includes Rowes IGA, with seven locations averaging 50,000 to 60,000 square feet, Jax Oriental in Mandarin at 12,000 square feet, [Patel Brothers on Baymeadows at 11,000 square feet](#), [La Salsa Market in Beachwood at 6,500 square feet](#), Asian Square Supermarket on Normandy and others.



Jax Oriental has been catering to the Mandarin community for over 25 years.

Surprising new arrivals

In recent months, Jacksonville's Southside has emerged as a major hub for large-format international grocers.

RD International, a 52,600-square-foot store on Beach Boulevard, opened in February 2024. [Lotte Plaza Market](#), a 45,800-square-foot South Korean-owned grocer in Regency, followed in September 2025. Now [Enson Market](#) has joined the [wave](#), opening in a 45,000-square-foot former Winn-Dixie at 11101 Old St. Augustine Road.

Together, the stores have drawn attention for their size, wide selections of international foods, extensive produce, meat and seafood departments and prepared-food offerings.

Founded by an Asian wholesale distributor in 2020, Enson Market aims to introduce unfamiliar shoppers to Asian produce, foods, drinks, snacks, sauces and home goods while also catering to the area's local Chinese population.

While about 80% of Enson products are similar across its approximately 887 stores, 20% of merchandise will cater to the large Chinese population in the surrounding area, store manager Jenny Ling told the Business Journal.

"Everyone is very excited because we've been in the process of converting the store for over a year," Ling said.

Through Enson Market Jax LLC, Old St. Augustine Plaza LLC paid \$5 million for the property on Feb. 6, 2025. Store operators are

still stocking shelves while interior build-out continues ahead of a grand opening ceremony expected in about two weeks.



Lotte Plaza Market brings new vitality to Jacksonville's Southside neighborhood.

"Over the last 10 to 15 years, there's been growing interest in Asian cultures and cuisines," said Calvin Yang, head of marketing for Lotte Plaza Market. We recognized an opportunity to bring new vitality and help rejuvenate the Southside neighborhood in Jacksonville."

Yang said it's important to cater to new customers who are curious about products that are new to them.

"In many cases, Asian markets can seem intimidating, even if you want to try the products and cuisine," he said. "We want Lotte Plaza Market to be a friendly gateway to Asian culture, providing experiences that build familiarity and promote engagement."

The run of openings may not be over. Patel Brothers, the largest Indian grocery chain in the United States with more than 50 locations nationwide, plans to open a 20,000-square-foot store with a food court in St. Johns later this year. H Mart, considered the largest Asian supermarket chain in the country with more than 97 locations, also has a planned 53,000-square-foot store on the Southside, though no opening date has been announced.

More room for growth

Jacksonville's international grocery boom is unfolding alongside broader national and local trends that suggest demand may have staying power.

On the national level, consumers are showing a growing appetite for global flavors, both at restaurants and at home.

Future Market Insights projects the ethnic foods market will more than double over the next decade, rising from \$33.7 billion in 2025 to \$68.9 billion in 2035. At the same time, higher restaurant prices are pushing more households back into their kitchens.

An Instacart survey found 81% of consumers say ongoing economic pressures, including rising food costs, have made cooking at home a continued priority. HelloFresh's 2025-2026 State of Home Cooking Report found 93% of Americans expect to cook as much or more over the next year, while 49% say they feel guilty spending money on restaurant meals.

Those trends may be especially relevant in Jacksonville, where population growth and demographic change are giving specialty grocers a larger customer base to chase. The U.S. Census Bureau projects Jacksonville's population will grow by about 11% over the next five years, fueled by inward migration of more than 100 people a day.

Jacksonville's multicultural population is also a key part of the equation. According to 2025 Census figures, the greater metro area has slightly more than 1 million residents, including about 100,000 Hispanic residents. The city also has Florida's largest Asian population at roughly 62,000 people, including about 25,000 residents of Filipino heritage and 14,000 of Indian heritage.



Patel Brothers caters to a growing Indian community in Northeast Florida.

Together, those forces help explain why operators are betting Jacksonville can support a growing roster of international

grocers, from long-established neighborhood markets to the new wave of large-format stores arriving across the Southside.

Jacksonville's population growth and expanding multicultural communities help explain why international grocers see room to grow here. But international markets are not competing by the same playbook as conventional supermarkets. Their edge often comes from differentiation, whether through hard-to-find imported products, prepared foods or a deeper connection to specific communities.

That may work in Jacksonville's favor as more shoppers seek out global ingredients and new culinary experiences. It also helps explain why operators are betting the market can support both longtime neighborhood stores and a new wave of larger-format international grocers.

Still, a growing market does not mean unlimited room. The arrival of several large-format stores in a relatively short period is raising the stakes, particularly for existing operators.

Many small- to mid-sized international supermarkets have supported Jacksonville's multicultural communities for years. Representatives from Jax Oriental and La Salsa, both noticeably smaller than the newest entrants, said they are far enough away from those larger stores to avoid direct competition. Both described their operations as neighborhood-focused and said, aside from the novelty factor surrounding the newer openings, they do not expect a major threat.

RD International, however, is in a different position. As Jacksonville's first large-footprint international supermarket, it now faces a growing list of similarly-scaled competitors.



The food court at RD International offers a wide range of dine-in and carry-out dishes that originate in China, Africa, Thailand, Korea and Laos.

“The growing number of equivalently sized international supermarkets will certainly have an impact,” said Aaron Guo, RD International's Jacksonville store manager. “With Jacksonville's growing population, we should be OK. More importantly, I believe our quality, extensive variety of fresh and shelf-stable brands, and attractive prices, coupled with shopping experiences that have been consistently well received by the community, will allow us to thrive.”

If the recent run of openings is any indication, Jacksonville is becoming a more important proving ground for international grocers betting on growth in the Southeast.

Which stores ultimately win may depend on location, loyalty and how well they balance authenticity with broader appeal. What is already clear is that Northeast Florida shoppers have more ways than ever to explore global cuisines without leaving their own neighborhoods.

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