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**Kroger Rolls Out Verified Savings Program With Produce Discounts for SNAP, WIC Shoppers**

*Eligible customers can expect 20% savings on fruits and vegetables and half off Boost memberships*

*Progressive Grocer  
Samantha Schober*

*Jan 2, 2026*

[Kroger](#) has launched a new discount program aimed at making fresh food and grocery delivery more affordable for customers who rely on government assistance like SNAP, WIC and Medicaid. The new Verification Savings Program offers eligible shoppers 20% off fruits and vegetables, as well as reduced pricing on Boost, Kroger's paid membership program.

Under the program, customers verify their eligibility [online](#) through [SheerID](#), a third-party identity verification company commonly chosen by retailers to confirm participation in assistance programs. Once approved, discounts are received automatically through their Kroger Digital account. Verification lasts for five months, after which shoppers must reverify to stay enrolled.

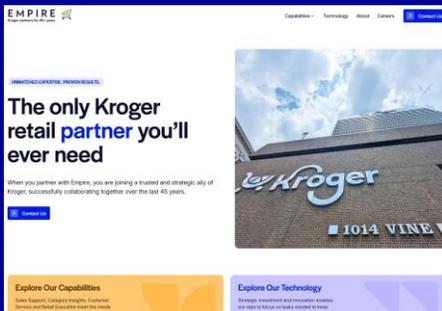
The 20% discount applies to all fruit and vegetable purchases at participating locations and runs through Jan. 31, 2026. The offer is limited to one redemption per household per day and requires a Kroger Shopper's Card.

"Making fresh food more affordable and equipping more customers with free grocery delivery is an incredible step in expanding food access," commented VP of Fresh Merchandising Carlo Baldan. "With the launch of the Verified Savings program, we are thrilled to make fruits and vegetables more affordable and eliminate one more barrier to food security in our mission to end hunger."

Alongside shopper savings, Verified Savings enrollees can sign up for Boost membership at half price. Discounted options include Boost Essential for \$34.50 per year or \$4.50 per month, and the full Boost plan for \$49.50 per year or \$6.50 per month. Customers who already have a Boost membership can apply the reduced rate at renewal or when extending their plan.

Boost memberships include unlimited free delivery on orders of \$35 or more, subject to availability, as well as double fuel points on qualifying purchases. Annual Boost members can also choose a streaming subscription with ads from Disney+, Hulu, or ESPN+, along with access to member-only offers throughout the year.

With the rollout of Verified Savings, Kroger joins a growing number of retailers experimenting with targeted pricing and membership incentives tied to income. This past November, Market 32 and Price Chopper announced [price cuts](#) for high-demand staples like eggs and pasta in an attempt to mitigate budget struggles. Others are beginning to accept benefits cards for food and health purchases at the checkout counter, with California-based Vallarta Supermarkets launching its [first-ever benefits integration effort](#) in December 2025.



**New Year, New Empire!**

**We launched a refreshed version of our website in early January:**

[www.empirefoods.com](http://www.empirefoods.com)

**Please take a look and let us know what you think at [marketing@empirefoods.com](mailto:marketing@empirefoods.com)!**

## How to Be 'Happier, Healthier With Harris Teeter'

Grocer's senior director of health and wellness provides details on new initiative

*Progressive Grocer*  
Bridget Goldschmidt

Jan 2, 2026

This month, Matthews, N.C.-based [Harris Teeter](#) kicks off the Happier, Healthier with Harris Teeter initiative with the launch of the grocer's new Simple Truth Protein line encompassing breakfast, snacks, meals and meal components; enhanced smart product attribute tagging, including high-protein, no added sugar, non-GMO and gluten-free; new digital tools, and a free 30-minute virtual visit with a Harris Teeter dietitian for every household with a VIC (Very Important Customer) loyalty program card.

To find out more, Progressive Grocer spoke with Lindsay Capozziello, senior director of health and wellness at Harris Teeter, a wholly owned subsidiary of [The Kroger Co.](#) The following trade-exclusive interview has been edited for length and clarity.

**Progressive Grocer: Thank you, Lindsay, for agreeing to speak with us at PG. Can you tell me how and why this program was developed and how the different elements across the store were incorporated to create this comprehensive initiative?**

**Lindsay Capozziello:** We're very excited to bring Happier, Healthier with Harris Teeter to our customers. This is something that we started over a year ago, and we're excited to now bring it to life at the beginning of the year. It began really out of feedback we got from our customers. Our customers are looking for ways to get more protein in their diets, to meet their goals, to [find] cleaner ingredients on the labels, and how we can support that along the way.

We know wellness is very personalized. It's also very complex and ever changing. And to be able to provide our customers a resource and tools to meet them where they are is really the goal of Happier, Healthier with Harris Teeter and how we bring that to life throughout the entire store, really leveraging each part of our store, from expert pharmacy advice to our nutrition counseling, the launch of our [Simple Truth Protein](#) line, and then some new nutritional digital tools for our customers to use to inform decisions at this shelf.

**PG: Speaking of protein, why was protein zeroed in on as a particular focus of this new introduction to the Simple Truth line?**

**LC:** Customers, again, are increasingly looking for ways to get more protein in their diet, and they're also looking for clean ingredients. So Simple Truth, we've had this, our own brand, in our stores for many years now. One of the things that makes it special is that it's free from unwanted ingredients. ... What a unique time to be able to combine Simple Truth and protein together to meet that customer where they are and support them on their goals. It's really about making protein affordable, accessible, providing a quality product without that premium price to our customers. It's something that our customers can feel good about, with the convenience factor, without having to sacrifice ... on some of the ingredients or things that are important to them.

**PG: Could you talk a little bit about these 30-minute virtual visits with a Harris Teeter dietitian for every VIC Card member? Are these kinds of consultations much requested by customers, and do you envision them as a way to start customers on their health journeys? Do customers have the option to schedule additional consultations beyond the program to keep them on track or if they have any other questions or concerns?**

[Read More...](#)

## New Foods and Experiences at HT



"We know wellness is very personalized. It's also very complex and ever changing. And to be able to provide our customers a resource and tools to meet them where they are is really the goal of Happier, Healthier with Harris Teeter and how we bring that to life throughout the entire store."

– Lindsay Capozziello, Senior Director of Health & Wellness at Harris Teeter

**Store and Leadership Updates**

**Our Insights Members Speaking at the CMA Conference in February**

**011 Atlanta**

Store 622 Bethlehem, GA  
Grand Opening 12/10

**021 Central**

Store 465 Imlay City, MI  
Re-Grand Opening 12/12

**Leadership Announcements**

**From January 13<sup>th</sup>:** “We are excited to promote several talented senior executives to key roles that will position Kroger for future success,” says Ron Sargent, Kroger’s Chairman and CEO. “Victor, Monica, Kendra, and Ken are strong leaders with decades of experience, and I look forward to their continued success in their new roles. I also want to thank Colleen and Tom for their many contributions to our customers, associates, and shareholders. We wish them well in their well-deserved retirements.”

**Victor Smith Promoted to Senior Vice President of Retail Divisions**

Victor Smith, currently president of the Atlanta Division, has been promoted to senior vice president of Retail Divisions, effective Feb. 1, 2026. He will report to Ron Sargent, chairman and CEO. Monica Garnes, currently president of the Fry’s Division, will succeed him as Atlanta Division president.

**Monica Garnes Promoted to President of Atlanta Division**

Monica Garnes, currently president of the Fry’s Division, has been promoted to president of the Atlanta Division, effective Feb. 1. She succeeds Victor Smith, who was named senior vice president of Retail Divisions. Monica will report to Victor, and will be succeeded by Ken DeLuca, who is currently Michigan Division president.

**Ken DeLuca Promoted to President of Fry’s Division**

Ken DeLuca, currently president the Michigan Division, has been promoted to president of the Fry’s Division, succeeding Monica Garnes. He will report to Valerie Jabbar, senior vice president of Retail Divisions. This move is effective Feb. 1. His successor will be named at a later date.

**Tom Schwilke Announces Plans to Retire**

Tom Schwilke, president of the Ralphs Division, has announced his plans to retire after seven years with Kroger and more than 42 years in the retail industry, effective March 31. He will be succeeded by Kendra Doyel, currently president of the Food 4 Less/Foods Co Division.

**Kendra Doyel Promoted to President of Ralphs Division**

Kendra Doyel, currently president of the Food 4 Less/Foods Co Division, has been promoted to president of the Ralphs Division, effective April 1. She succeeds Tom Schwilke who has announced his plans to retire. Tom and Kendra will work together to transition leadership of the division over the coming months. Kendra will report to Joe Kelley, senior vice president of retail divisions, and her successor will be announced at a later date.

**Colleen Juergensen Announces Plans to Retire**

After 45 years of dedicated service, Colleen Juergensen, president of the Central Division, has announced her plans to retire, effective April 6. Her successor will be named at a later date.

The full article with [additional details can be found here](#).



[Elizabeth and Mark are part of the Private Label and CPG Presentation & Discussion](#)



[Jennifer is participating in the Leadership Panel & Discussion](#)



## Gelson's to Sell Unprofitable Store to Ralphs

*The grocery chain expects to transfer ownership and operations of its location in Carlsbad, California, to the Kroger-owned banner on March 9*

*Grocery Dive  
Sam Silverstein*

*Jan 5, 2026*

### Dive Brief:

- Gelson's Markets has agreed to sell its location in Carlsbad, California, to Kroger-owned Ralphs, the Southern California specialty grocer announced in an emailed statement on Dec. 29. Terms of the deal were not disclosed.
- Ralphs is set to take over ownership and operations of the store on March 9.
- Gelson's said it decided to sell the store after trying unsuccessfully to improve the unprofitable store's financial performance.

### Dive Insight:

Gelson's described its decision to transfer its store in Carlsbad to Ralphs as a last resort, noting that it plans to keep investing in its business even as it sells the San Diego-area location.

"This store has faced ongoing financial challenges for several years, and despite continued efforts to improve performance, it remains unprofitable. After careful consideration, we made the difficult decision to sell the store," Gelson's said.

The company said that it will "continue normal operations" at its locations in Del Mar, California, and San Diego's Pacific Beach neighborhood, both of which are located in the same vicinity as the Carlsbad store.

In addition, the chain, which runs 28 stores in the San Diego and Los Angeles metropolitan areas, said it is proceeding with plans to open a new, small format store in Toluca Lake, California. That location, which will span 10,000 square feet, is scheduled to [begin operations](#) at the end of January.

Gelson's website indicates that the Carlsbad store, located at 7660 El Camino Real, will permanently close on Feb. 28.

Gelson's suggested that at least some of the employees who work at the Carlsbad store will lose their jobs as a result of the sale. "We intentionally sought a buyer willing to retain as many team members as possible rather than pursuing a closure without transition opportunities," the company said in the announcement, without elaborating.

## Gelson's Selling San Diego-area Location



Photo of a Gelson's Markets store.

Ralphs is set to take ownership and operations of the CA store on March 9.

## Ecomm Update



The ecommerce brand was originally acquired by Kroger in 2014.

## Kroger sells Vitacost to iHerb

*Move reflects ongoing efforts to streamline operations*

*Supermarket News  
Mark Hamstra*

*Jan 9, 2026*

Kroger continued to revamp its ecommerce operations with the sale this week of its Vitacost subsidiary to iHerb, a global supplier of vitamins, supplements and other health and wellness products.

Terms of the transaction, which closed on Jan. 8, were not disclosed. Cincinnati-based Kroger said the sale reflects the company's ongoing focus on streamlining its operations and improving the customer experience through a review of its non-core assets.

"The sale of Vitacost is an important step in that process," said Ron Sargent, chairman and CEO of Kroger.

The Vitacost divestment follows the announcement last year that Kroger would [close 60 supermarkets](#) in markets around the country over the coming months and its recent decision to [scale back its partnership](#) with automated warehouse operator Ocado.

Kroger said the sale would not impact its financial guidance for the year. In December, Kroger said it expected full-year identical-store sales to be between 2.8% and 3%, and operating profit to be between \$4.8 billion and \$4.9 billion.

### Vitacost boosts iHerb's U.S. presence

Irvine, Calif.-based iHerb Holdings said the acquisition of Vitacost would support its growth efforts in the U.S.

"Vitacost has a loyal customer base and deep assortment of products that aligns closely with our mission to make health and wellness accessible to all," said Emun Zabihi, CEO of iHerb. "This acquisition immediately expands our scale in the U.S., strengthens our relationships with key brands and adds a largely incremental customer base to iHerb's platform."

iHerb said it currently has about 15 million customers in 180 countries and operates nine logistics centers across the U.S., Asia and the Middle East. Vitacost, meanwhile, offers delivery of nearly 40,000 items, including dietary supplements (vitamins, minerals and herbs), specialty foods, organic body and personal care products, pet products and sports nutrition products.

### Vitacost supported Kroger's ecommerce, wellness efforts

Kroger had [acquired Vitacost in 2014](#) for about \$280 million, saying at the time that the established ecommerce retailer would help Kroger jump-start its own fledgling ecommerce operations. Vitacost reported sales of \$383 million in 2013 but had been losing money for each of the previous four years.

In addition to bolstering Kroger's ecommerce expertise and infrastructure—Vitacost had two fulfillment centers that supplied customers in all 50 states and internationally—the acquisition also dovetailed with Kroger's growing focus on health and wellness, the company said at the time of the acquisition.

In 2022, Kroger recorded a goodwill impairment charge of \$160 million for Vitacost.com, noting that the talent and capabilities it acquired from the online retailer had been key to the advancement of Kroger's digital capabilities. However, Kroger said its focus had shifted to store pickup and delivery. Commission at the time.

[Read more...](#)