

A South African's guide to moving to and making it in Malta: the legendary supermarket of Barbra Streisand

 By [Marcus 'The Maltese Falcon' Brewster](#)

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On her breakthrough 1963 debut album, Streisand resurrected a Cole Porter gem '*Come to the Supermarket*'. Malta may not be the old Peking of the lyric but it has the German supermarket brand whose range and diversity is as exotic to South African eyes - and tastebuds - as the one extolled in Barbra's virtuoso Grammy-winning recording.

Lidl, the pan-European supermarket chain I am referring to, has over 10,500 stores across the continent and North America. It's a very interesting and progressive shopping concept and one I predict would clean up if launched in SA as it seems to hit a sweet spot not touched by Shoprite, Checkers and PnP. Additionally it offers gourmet foods more associated with Woolworths and a rotating array of products that one would normally expect to find at Game or Dion.

Parking your ostrich

For starters, Lidl in Malta is always a stand-alone store and never an anchor tenant in a mall as we are accustomed to seeing supermarkets in SA. Here on the island, it's generally located on the outskirts of a village where obviously there is enough land to establish the building and its parking lot. (As Streisand sings – presciently about the SA consumer! – “if you come on an ostrich you can park it!”).

Lidl's have a smallish box size which they compensate for with an unusual listing strategy. About 65% of the products are daily essentials with the remaining 35% of the store devoted to special offers that change twice-weekly. These promoted, temporary product lines are always led by specialist food items which are normally regional-cuisine themed. In any one month we could be stocking our larders from Lidl's with delicacies from French, Italian, Iberian or Asian kitchens!

Since the festive season began, Lidl's has been focussed on Christmas lines so the regionality of the products is less evident than the special occasion nature of the offers.



Lidl, Mbsta. Image credit: Lidl Malta via Facebook

Panoply of choice

To conjure up the panoply of choice, here are some examples from the current catalogue which is mail-dropped to all households three days in advance. As all South Africans are curious about cost-of-living in Europe, I have included a rand cost estimation (calculated at an exchange rate of 16:1). In addition I have quoted the price per kilo which I have left in Euros.

As we try (with increasingly limited motivation) to be a Banting household, we turn away from Pizza with Shrimps and Asparagus R44,64 (E7,34 p/kg), Pappardelle with Lobster Filling R31,84 (E7,96 p/kg), Ravioli with Pecorino Cheese and Honey R22,44 (E5,56 p/kg) and Cappellacci with Chanterelle Mushrooms R27,04 (E6,76 p/kg) – the latter two described as made with free range eggs. Similarly, we may be obliged to avert our eyes from Polenta Mix with Truffle R39,84 (E12,45 p/kg) and the Carnaroli Risotto Mix R23,84 (E7,10 p/kg) with mascarpone cheese and blueberries.

So much for the carbs, let's not talk about the sugar items: Pear and Chocolate Tart R47,84 (E8,54 p/kg), Soft Nougat slabs R35,04 (E12,17 p/kg) and a choice between the Deluxe Christmas Fruit Cake R119,84 (E8,26 p/kg) and the Christmas Dundee Cake R87,84 (E6,86 p/kg) described as an all butter cake rich with fruit and decorated with whole almonds.

This will give you an idea of the gourmet choices we were pleasantly surprised to find on the island (not to mention in a discount supermarket) but which does speak to the benefits of living in an EU country with access to a big European retail brand.



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Cost-comparison

For more straightforward cost-comparison purposes, consider the following shopping list: a litre of whole milk costs R12, a half dozen eggs cost R15,20 and a 200g bag of mixed lettuce cost R15,84. Spoils such as a 450g block of mature blue stilton R79,84 (E10,99 p/kg), cream cheese spread R23,84 (E14,90 p/kg) or Highland single malt scotch whisky R207,84 (E18,56 p/l) would pad your credit card bill accordingly.

But Lidl vaults past comparisons with normal supermarkets to compete in the hypermarket category as well because it's rotating 35% special weekly inventory also deliver on hardware items (e.g. orbital sander), gardening (retractable pruning shears), appliances (vacuum packing machine), homeware (duvet covers) and mens, ladies and children's clothing.

What's so fiendishly clever about the Lidl's model is that the rotating 35% product lines change twice weekly and this incentivises two trips a week to the store to check out what new gadgets and appliances are on offer. This, combined with the proximity of the store's location to the village, make grocery shopping a pleasure rather than a chore.

ABOUT MARCUS 'THE MALTESE FALCON' BREWSTER

marcusbrewster is a brand synonymous with PR excellence in SA. An industry innovator, leader, and inspiration, Brewster affiliated his multi-award winning boutique firm with larger Level 1 BBBEE marketing/comms agency MediaRevolution for scale in 2016 and went on to launch Marcus Brewster International in Europe the following year. Marcus currently lives on - and actively promotes - the Mediterranean island of Malta. For African, S. African and European PR enquiries, contact marcus@marcusbrewster.com or WhatsApp on (+356) 9931 3322

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