



## South Florida's Unique Store

This photo-program is about a store called, "Robert Is Here." A unique store, but one that has been developed in the style of many other great food and service stores throughout America.

Before we share our experience at "Robert Is Here," let's learn about the grocery-food/service business in America.

### What's the difference?

Between a convenience, grocery, produce, bakery, chain, and specialty store and a supermarket? The answer is basically none if it meets a customer's needs. Of course, there are many operational and price differences.

If you want to learn more about the history of food/service store, go to "[History of the supermarket industry in America](#)." According to stacker.com, the first grocery store to offer many products and services under one roof was King Kullen in 1930. Historically the grocery stores operated on a small-scale, with personal-service method that included a costly overhead expense. Some stores even offered credit accounts and delivery that cut into the profit margin.

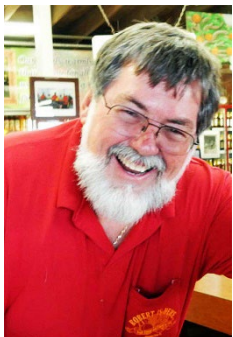
### King Kullen

Michael J. Cullen (1884-1936) was born in Newark, NJ. Beginning in 1902, he worked for A&P (The Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company 1870) for 17 years, and other grocery companies including Kroger Grocery & Baking Company. His foresight was to develop a cash and carry store that offered customers lower prices, self-service, and serve them in a large-roomy place. He also had the idea of creating "lost-leaders." Defined, a lost leader is when you sell a popular commodity or service at cost to attract customers, in hopes of selling other items with a higher profit margin. <supermarketnews.com>

When I was in high school, I worked in a city department store that kept its popular film development and photo supply section in the back of the store. The idea was to get customers to the back of the store with the probability that they would also purchase other goods as they entered or left the store. My manager said it worked!

Cullen's plan and price-mark was described in a letter in the 1930s: "Cullen described stores would be 80% self-service, located outside a city's main business center; capable of doing \$10,000 a week in grocery sales at a net profit of 2.5% and \$2,500 a week in meat sales, at a 3% net profit; and where 300 items would be sold at cost, 200 others at 5% above cost, 300 more at 15% above cost and another 300 at 20% above cost." <supermarketnews.com>

"Cullen promoted his initial store with a barrage of newspaper ads and door-to-door circulars that listed columns of brand names and low prices under the heading, "King Kullen—The World's Greatest Price Wrecker." According to the company, the store was an immediate hit, drawing customers from 75 and 100 miles away. Cullen's store caused a sensation across the grocery industry." <supermarketnews.com>



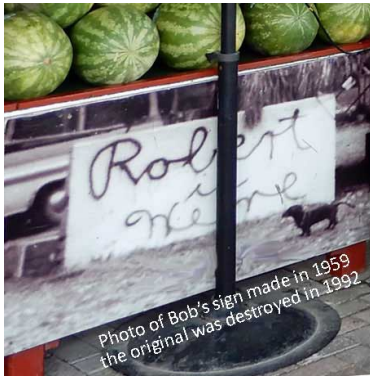
### Robert Moehling

"Robert is Here" is a multi-generational family-owned and operated business that provides tropical fruit, vegetables, canned food, "delicious" milkshakes, a small animal farm, and is a tourist attraction in Homestead, Dade County, Florida City, near the entrance to Everglades National Park. This photo-program includes our experience, sources below and information from "Robert Is Here: Looking East for a Lifetime," a book published in 2015 by Free Range Publishing, LLC, authored by Cesar Becerra. <<https://www.robertishere.com/collections/book>> The store is open 9am-6pm. It rests on 10 acres of land at 19200 SW. 344th St., Homestead, FL 33034. Phone 305-246-1592. It is 41 miles from Miami to the fruit stand.

In 1953, Robert Moehling came to South Florida from Chicago, Illinois when he was three months old. His father, Bob, and mother, Mary Monaco (whose family were from Palermo, Sicily) drove 1,400 miles with their children to live in Homestead, Florida City, Dade County, Florida. There, they started chicken farming. They found chicken farming difficult

for a lot of different economic and operational reasons. Retail sales and bartering became part of their egg business existence. During the 1950s, Homestead was mainly a railroad town associated with the Florida East Coast Railroad.

## “Robert Is Here” Begins



Robert became a “businessman” at a very early age. One day in November of 1959, his father, Bob, had 400 bushels of unsold cucumbers. He took those crates of cucumbers and his son and put him on the corner of Southwest 344<sup>th</sup> Street and 192<sup>nd</sup> Avenue (present site of Robert Is Here) in hopes of making some money given his excess cucumber situation. Robert was six years old, and the “Robert Is Here” sign was scrolled on wood from a hurricane shutter by his father to let people know that he was there to sell the cucumbers. The book has an interesting account of that event on pages 28-31. The original sign would be kept for posterity until it was destroyed by Hurricane Andrew in 1992.

That simplistic poster has become the family’s business moniker. The stand grew because of its closeness to its location near the entrance of Everglades National Park. The Park opened in 1947. The family began to purchase and grow fresh fruit and vegetables and sell them.

Hurricanes caused the family many problems over the years. One destroyed the chicken business. Robert’s life at the stand eventually became his job. The book discusses in detail Robert’s life growing up with issues related to his eyesight, courses in school, teacher attitudes, and other social, cultural, and business matters.

In 1981, Robert married Tracey. They had four children (Brandon, Victoria, Robert, and Savannah). They encouraged their children to get a college education. The children have returned to help operate the business. Today he has over 50 employees who are like part of the family.

Tragedy has also been part of Robert’s life experience. Robert’s father died in 1975. Just several days before Hurricane Andrew struck and devastated Homestead in 1992, his mother was found murdered in her home, not far from the stand. Mary Moehling’s murderer has to this day not been brought to justice. Her funeral and the Hurricane were overwhelming to the family. Over 170,000 were made homeless with over \$25 billion in damage to South Florida.



The family recovery from Hurricane Andrew came with a lot of effort, planning, help from friends in faraway places. The Everglades National Park had to be closed. The hurricane had destroyed thousands of trees. It took months and a lot of patience and personal fortitude to go on after Robert and Tracey had to deal with Mary’s death and the amount of cleanup and rebuilding of what they had before.

Robert, in the book, recounted how the Moehling family, his wife and children, their families, and others worked very hard to rebuild the stand and turn it into a positive experience again. Robert’s love of South Florida, its fragile environment, and the importance of agriculture verses urban development encroachment.

The “Robert Is Here” book has an index that includes a Tropical Fruit Guide at the stand. They include: Apple Bananas, Asian Guavas, Avocadoes, Caimito (Star Apple), Carambola (Star Fruit), Ciruela, Canistel (Egg Fruit), Dragon Fruit, Guanabana (Sour Sop), Jaboticaba, Jackfruit, Key Lime, Kumquat, Longans, Lychee, Mangos, Mamey Sapote, Miracle Fruit, Monster Deliciosa, Papaya, Passion Fruit, Sapodilla, Sapote (Black), Spanish Limes (Mamoncillos, Genipas), Sugar Apples (Anon, Atemoya, Cherimoya), Sugar Cane, Tamarind, and Water Coconut/Coconut.



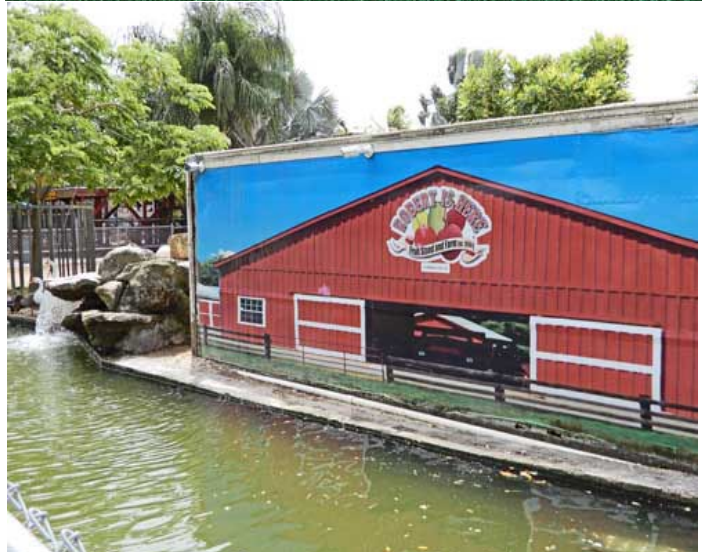
We have been to Robert Is Here several times and will return in the future. It is truly a unique food stand.



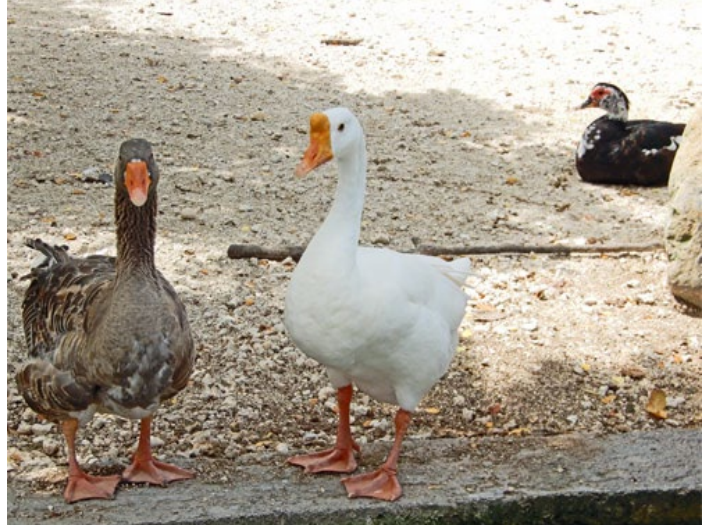




STEP 1 Choose		
MILKSHAKE	OR	SMOOTHIE
STEP 2 Mix up to 3, highest price takes over		
Regular	Special	Popular Combinations
Banana \$7.25	Black Sapote <b>NOT AV</b>	Banana Passion \$7.25 (contains seeds)
Blackberry \$7.25	Blueberry \$8.00	Banana Pineapple \$7.25
Chocolate \$7.25	<b>NOT AVAILABLE</b>	Coconut
Coconut \$7.25	Coffee \$8.00	Cherry Key Lime <b>NOT AV</b>
<b>NOT AVAILABLE</b>	Dragon Fruit \$8.00	Papaya Banana \$7.25
Key Lime \$7.25	<b>NOT A</b>	Papaya Passion \$7.25 (contains seeds)
Orange \$7.25	Jackfruit \$8.00	Strawberry Banana \$7.25
Papaya \$7.25	Mamey \$8.00	Strawberry Key \$7.25
Passion Fruit (WITH SEEDS) \$7.25	Mango \$8.00	Lime
Pineapple \$7.25	<b>NOT AV</b>	Strawberry Mango \$8.00
Strawberry \$7.25	Premium	Strawberry Passion \$7.25 (contains seeds)
Tamarind \$7.25	Guanabana \$10.00	
Vanilla \$7.25		
Add-ons		
*Please let the order taker know if anyone in your party has a food allergy. Required for smoothies (Ice & Fruit only)		
Sugar \$0.00	Splenda \$0.00	Honey \$1.00
Kale \$0.50   Spinach \$0.50   Whipped Cream \$0.50		
Key Lime Tart: \$3.75   Key Lime Pie: \$15.95		
• Extras <b>NOT AVAILABLE</b> \$0   Miracle Fruit: \$1.50 per piece •		









Sources: <https://stacker.com/stories/3984/history-supermarket-industry-america>, <https://kingkullen.com/about-us/>, <https://www.supermarketnews.com/retail-amp-financial/michael-j-cullen-2009-sn-hall-fame>, <https://www.groceteria.com/store/national-chains/ap/ap-history/>, <https://www.grocerydive.com/news/grocery--iconic-ap-grocery-brand-finds-a-buyer/534050/>, <https://www.robertishere.com/collections/book>, <https://www.robertishere.com/pages/about-us>, <https://golatinos.net/the-story-of-robert-owner-and-founder-of-robert-is-here/>, <https://www.miamianbeaches.com/things-to-do/attractions/delicious-treat-robert-is-here>, <https://www.familybusinessmagazine.com/robert-here-along-his-family>, <https://www.floridarambler.com/historic-florida-getaways/robert-is-here/>, <https://authenticflorida.com/robert-is-here-and-has-been-here-for-62-years/>, <https://www.robertishere.com/products/robert-is-here-looking-east-for-a-lifetime>, <https://www.miaminewtimes.com/news/robert-isnt-here-6360590>, <https://www.tampabay.com/things-to-do/travel/florida/make-this-old-time-florida-roadside-stop-for-a-mango-shake/2118335/>, <https://thezestpodcast.com/robert-is-here-fruit-stand/>, and, <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/robert-is-here>.

**acuri.net**

**John R. Vincenti**

**Robert Is Here**