



OpenTable's grocery reservation system could help reduce crowds at supermarkets and allow better management of stock | Photo source [Martijn Baudoin on Unsplash](#)

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## RESTAURANT RESERVATION PLATFORM PIVOTS TO GROCERY SHOPPING



### OpenTable has a new option that allows shoppers to reserve a slot for their grocery shopping, potentially bolstering social distancing efforts

**Spotted:** One effect of the coronavirus lockdown is that grocery stores are being swamped with shoppers. People are buying more food because they can no longer go out to eat, and to reduce the number of times they shop each week. But the need for social distancing also means there are long waits just to get in the door at most supermarkets. Restaurant reservation platform, OpenTable, is trying to help. The platform has expanded its offering to let users reserve timeslots for grocery shopping.

Grocery stores and supermarkets can use the new app to limit the waiting times and reduce crowds waiting to enter the store. Each retailer can adapt the platform to allow different numbers of reservation slots.

For users, shopping times can be reserved on OpenTable in the same way that they can reserve a restaurant table. They can then enter the store at their appointed time without waiting. Shoppers who have not pre-reserved can also join an online waiting list and wait at home or in their car for their slot, avoiding crowds near the door.

As restaurants were forced to close, OpenTable initially pivoted to encouraging people to opt for home delivery or purchase restaurant gift cards. However, this new initiative focuses on the needs of consumers. **According to** OpenTable's chief technology officer, Joseph Essas, the company, "put a team of engineers together and built this in less than a week."

Grocery stores are facing unprecedented challenges due to the pandemic. While they are busier than ever, they must also limit the number of customers in stores at any one time, and they are facing widespread shortages of essential items. Springwise has seen a number of innovations that aim to help such stores, which include the use of [Instacart's database](#) to ease shortages and an automated [alert system](#) that helps people keep their distance whilst shopping for their supplies.

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Website: [opentable.co.uk](http://opentable.co.uk)

### **Takeaway:**

For key workers and the elderly, who are much more susceptible to the coronavirus, OpenTable's platform may be particularly welcome. The new option is also an example of how businesses can adapt their way of thinking in order to continue to operate under new conditions. As the needs of consumers change, companies may have to find new ways of thinking about what they sell. To survive, they will need to focus less on space or products, and more on service and motivation.