

FOOD ????

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With no fanfare, Amazon has entered the food-delivery arena in Philadelphia with the debut Monday night of its AmazonFresh service in Center City.

AmazonFresh delivers the usual supermarket grocery, perishable and pantry items plus products from specialty shops and restaurants in Philadelphia and Brooklyn.

In addition, said AmazonFresh vice president Tom Weiland, orders can include the familiar Amazon complement of toys, electronics, and household goods - about 500,000 items, all told.

Customers can place an order by 10 a.m. and get items by dinnertime, or order by 10 p.m. and expect delivery by breakfast the next morning.

Weiland offered a scenario of a customer's ordering for a house party, and getting the food and all the party supplies delivered at the same time.

Delivery is free for orders over \$35. Members of Amazon Prime - the two-day delivery service that costs \$99 a year - can use AmazonFresh for free through the end of the year.

The Prime customers will have to upgrade to Amazon's Prime Fresh service after that. Its \$299-a-year price tag has generated grumbling in Seattle, San Francisco and Los Angeles, the other cities that AmazonFresh is offered.

AmazonFresh debuted on the East Coast a month ago in the Park Slope neighborhood of Brooklyn.

Weiland said the assortment of products in its online catalog justified the fee.

Prices, he said, would be competitive. A spot-check confirmed this.

The delivery area will expand beyond Center City, Weiland said, offering no timetable or geographic clues. He declined to elaborate on AmazonFresh's number of local employees, warehousing and distribution methods, or projected revenues.

AmazonFresh is competing with such services as Instacart (which delivers from various stores and state liquor stores in a wide swath

of the Philadelphia metro area in an hour or less), Peapod (owned by the parent company of Giant Food of Carlisle, Pa.), and FreshDirect (like AmazonFresh, a company that maintains its own warehouses and inventory).

AmazonFresh will deliver food from some Reading Terminal Market and Philadelphia merchants and restaurants as well as restaurants and food companies in New York such as Red Hook Lobster Pound and Kettlebell Kitchen

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