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Dirty tricks claim as price war mounts

(and real battle ground is drinks counter)

By Kate Chambré

THE supermarket price war showed no signs of abating last night as stores cut prices by 6pc in a bid to fight off competitors.

But as prices dropped there were claims that one store raised tariffs ahead of the abolition of the Groceries Order.

The taking down of the order has led to price-cuts in not just food or staples but also alcohol, leading health experts to voice their concerns about the risks this brings.

Commentators are claiming that one of Ireland's leading supermarkets has duped consumers by increasing the prices of some grocery items in the lead-up to its reductions.

Tesco claims to have reduced the price on 5,000 products by an average of 4.6pc since May and plans to cut the price of 5,000 more products in the



Subterfuge: Tesco has been accused of raising prices before Groceries Order was abolished

One third raised in price before sale

near future. But a survey revealed that in a sample basket of 39 staple items featured among the supermarket's advertised cuts, one third was raised in price just before they went on sale.

The goods included common household purchases such as bread, marmalade, eggs, orange juice, and corn flakes.

In some cases, Tesco shoppers are now paying the same, or even more, for the items than they were at the beginning of the year.

Brennan's wholegrain sliced bread, which was reduced from €1.48 to €1.45 last week, was €1.39 up until February - the price was increased in the spring. This casts doubt over whether other advertised cuts represent as much of a bargain for customers as claimed.

The consumer champion Eddie Hobbs last week urged shoppers to switch to Tesco to put pressure on Dunnes Stores to follow suit with its own price reductions.

He said it was 'disappointing' if, as reported, Tesco had increased prices just before

cutting them, but argued that it was 'not surprising,' and urged consumers to 'vote with their feet' in order 'to get results from the taking down of the Groceries Order'.

Hobbs said it may have been a mistake to give supermarkets five months' notice that the order would be abolished.

Enterprise Minister Micheál Martin announced his intention to lift the order last November.

Meanwhile SuperValu, a company which controls more than 20pc of the Irish Grocery Market, has cut prices of a huge bulk of its products by an average of 6pc since the beginning of May. According to Edel

Clancy, head of corporate affairs at the Musgrave Group, which owns the SuperValu franchise: 'Hundreds of SuperValu prices have come down since May.'

She said this included, 'things like Brennan's bread,

It was a mistake to give notice

Pampers nappies, and Heinz sauces, products that consumers buy on a regular basis'.

Rejecting recent surveys, which stated that supermarket prices were spiralling, Miss Clancy said the most recent

Consumer Price Index data, showed that grocery prices had not increased since May.

Health experts, however, are warning supermarkets to think twice about using cut-price alcohol promotions to entice customers into their shops.

Dr Mick Loftus, a former coroner in North Mayo believes promotions of alcohol are breeding a culture of alcoholism in Ireland.

Complaints that two drinks promotions could encourage irresponsible or heavy drinking were upheld yesterday by the Independent Complaints Panel as breaches of MEAS's Code of Practice on the Naming, Packaging & Promotion of Alcoholic Drinks.

	SuperValu	Tesco	Superquinn	Dunnes Stores	Off licence
Cheapest Red wine per bottle	€5.49	€4.85	€ 5.49	€3.99	€6.99
Cheapest White wine per bottle	€5.49	€5.47	€5.49	€3.99	€6.99
Cheapest Vodka	€13.65	€14.99	€21.41	€14.95	€18.99
Smlnoff Ice 70cl	€6.59	€5.49	€6.59	€6.28	€6.50
Scotch Whiskey (cheapest bottle)	€13.99	€14.99	€19.29	€16.25	€23.99
Guinness six cans 500mls	€11.10	€9.99	€11.10	€11.10	€12.90
Stella Artois 10 bottles	€12.55	€11.99	€9.99	€9.99	€17.90

Man killed outside his granny's house

By Alan Sherry

A DUBLIN man was stabbed to death outside his grandmother's home where he was celebrating a 21st birthday party.

James O'Donoghue was stabbed in the chest outside the house in Ballymun, north Dublin, after a fight broke out among a group of people who were not invited to the celebration.

The young man also had a bottle pushed in his face when he intervened in the fight which took place in the early hours of yesterday morning.

Mr O'Donoghue, from Coolock, also in north Dublin, was found at Dane Road at

around 2am and was rushed to the Mater Hospital where he died a short time later.

Two teenagers and an older man are being questioned by gardai in connection with the stabbing of the 26-year-old.

Witnesses said that the fight took place to the rear of the house on Dane Road.

His body was removed to the city morgue where Dr Michael Curtis carried out a post-mortem yesterday.

His aunt Eileen Dunphy said he was at two 21st birthday parties on Saturday.

'He was celebrating his

girlfriend's birthday as well,' she said. 'He was supposed to be going out for dinner with his girlfriend yesterday, but he's not going out for dinner. He's on a slab.'

The three men are being held in Ballymun, Santry and Whitehall Garda stations.

Mr O'Donoghue's killing is the second in Ballymun recent weeks.

Last month Gregory Rowan died following an assault in a flat on Sillogue Road, Ballymun. The 44-year-old was originally thought to have died of a drug overdose but a post-mortem revealed he died as a result of a serious assault.

Gardaí believe several men were involved in the assault.



Victim: James O'Donoghue