

The scoop on local ice cream



• THE SWEET STORY •

By Henry Verden

One of my fondest memories of growing up was the ice cream truck slowly cruising through my neighborhood on those hot summer days. The sound of *The Merry-Go-Round Broke Down* or *The Entertainer* played through tinny speakers would send kids scrambling in every direction to get a quarter before the truck got away. Nothing in the world ever tasted as good as those frozen treats during the hazy summers of so long ago.

America loves ice cream. The average American eats 23.2 quarts of frozen dairy products every year. In the north central states, the average is 41.7 quarts. Ninety-eight percent of all households purchase ice cream. According to the International Ice Cream Association, the most popular flavors are vanilla (29%), chocolate (8.9%), butter pecan (5.3%), strawberry (5.3%), and Neapolitan (4.2%).

To supply our ever-increasing demand, the ice cream industry in America now produces 1.54 billion gallons of ice cream a year, much of it produced by local and regional manufacturers. Some of the best are produced in southern Wisconsin. We put some of them to the test to see how their vanilla ice cream would stand up.



Babcock Hall Ice Cream

Babcock Hall ice cream is unusual in that it is not made by a company but by the University of Wisconsin in Madison. Babcock Hall is the home of the Department of Food Sciences within the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. The hall is named after Prof. Stephen M. Babcock who, in 1890, discovered a simple and inexpensive way of testing the butterfat content of milk.

What you really need to know about Babcock Hall is that it contains a dairy plant and, most importantly, a dairy store that sells ice cream that is the food of the gods. The state-of-the-art dairy plant can and does manufacture yogurt, butter, cheese, and fluid milk products. They also make ice cream ... really, really good ice cream in over 90

flavors divided into two types: regular and super premium. Flavors include popular favorites as well as flavors like Union Utopia (vanilla ice cream with a fudge, caramel, and peanut butter swirl) and Berry Jubilee (a berry flavored ice cream with strawberries and raspberries).

Many of the special flavors are created for specific groups or special events as Eileen Karre, the Dairy Store Manager, explained, “Right now we have Aloha SOAR which is for the SOAR (Student Orientation, Advising, and Registration) Program that takes place during the summer for students that are coming in the fall. It’s vanilla ice cream with pineapple and chocolate chips.”

The taste of Babcock Hall ice cream almost defies description. Their vanilla uses the finest quality ingredients available to produce a flavor that is silky smooth with an indulgent, creamy taste that fills your mouth without overwhelming your taste buds and makes you want to savor each delightful spoonful. They do all that with a fat content you would swear is much higher at a remarkable 8 percent.

It used to be that the only place you could get Babcock Hall ice cream was at Babcock Hall, but it has started appearing in select retail locations, so keep an eye out for it. Some of the places you can find it include Cheesers in Stoughton, Ken’s Market in Monona, and Sweets on Third in Wausau.

Chocolate Shoppe Ice Cream

Chocolate Shoppe ice cream is another Madison institution, starting as a family-owned business in 1962 on Madison’s east side. They now have three stores in the Madison area and distribute super premium ice cream to select retail and restaurant locations throughout Wisconsin and parts of surrounding states.

Chocolate Shoppe offers more than 110 flavors. These include 29 standard flavors, 21 specialty flavors (like Fat Elvis—banana ice cream rippled with peanut butter and chunks of chocolate), 14 nut flavors, 10 seasonal flavors, three no-sugar-added flavors, as well as four soy-based flavors.

Chocolate Shoppe vanilla ice cream has sinful amounts of cream and top-quality ingredients. The vanilla is thick and creamy, almost to the point of being gooey, with a buttery overtone. Megan Turk, Chocolate Shoppe Brand Manager, explained what sets their ice cream apart. “It’s the butterfat content and the overruns. The overrun is how much air is mixed with the ice cream. More air means a sandier, grittier texture. Our overrun is only 34% so there’s not as much room for ice crystals to grow.”

This is a vanilla that’s best eaten plain, bite by creamy bite. There are 14 grams of fat in a serving but as their



nutritional information statement on their website says, “That means it’s not low-fat, low-calorie, or low anything and that’s why everyone loves it. You want nutrition, eat carrots.” If you want a really, really delicious treat, grab some Chocolate Shoppe ice cream.

Turk also mentioned that Chocolate Shoppe will be creating a new flavor for a name-the-flavor contest coming up in August. “We’re not sure what’s going to be in it yet but it’s going to be a fun flavor. And the winner gets a year’s supply of ice cream.”

Schoep’s Ice Cream

Schoep’s ice cream is the big kid of our test group and has been turning out quality ice cream since 1928 when E.J. Schoephoester began making small batches in the back of his grocery store. Today Schoep’s produces 12 million gallons of ice cream annually in around 200 flavors. Schoep’s makes seven kinds of vanilla ice cream. While we didn’t test them all, our personal favorite was the New York Vanilla.

“The big thing that sets us apart is our recipes. They have been around since the 1920s. The only thing that’s changed is the equipment we make it on,” says Al Thompson of Schoep’s. “Another key is the people that work for us. Many of them have worked for us for many years. They feel a sense of ownership and take pride in the company.”

Schoep’s is the kind of ice cream you remember from your childhood. The taste of the cream and vanilla are evenly balanced to create a satisfying, complete flavor.

Sibby’s Homestead Organic Ice Cream

As the name implies, Sibby’s Homestead Organic Ice Cream is an organic product in an industry that boasts few organic manufacturers. Sue Sebion-Huber (her nickname is Sibby) only makes two flavors, vanilla and chocolate, made from only five all-organic ingredients: eggs, cream, nonfat dry milk, sugar, vanilla extract, and, in the case of chocolate, a sixth ingredient of cocoa. Her vanilla and cocoa are fair trade imports and everything else is purchased locally. “I was able to go to the Chaseburg Creamery and get my cream fresh and then I sourced my other ingredients,” said Sebion-Huber, “so when I found out I was able to get all my ingredients organically, I went to a little ice cream manufacturer called Viroqua Dairy and ran our first batch of ice cream.”

She’s not stopping at two flavors. More are soon to come as Sebion-Huber explained, “The third flavor will be strawberry and the fourth flavor will be Sibby’s Favorite and that’s going to swap out according to the season.”

Sebion-Huber is a small producer (100,000 pints annually) compared to someone like Schoep’s, but that

allows her to make ice cream having an old-fashioned flavor that's not often found anymore. Her vanilla is fresh and clean—you can taste every ingredient as this smooth-textured treat melts on your tongue. With only 8 percent fat, the vanilla flavor is clearly evident and not overwhelmed by the buttery taste of the cream.

When we taste-tested these ice creams, we stuck to vanilla because it's ice cream in its purest form. We didn't try one we didn't like, as each had its merits. At the end of the day what brand you like is an intensely personal choice, governed by what characteristics combine to make you purr inside.

Neighborhood ice cream trucks are a rare commodity these days. The flavors of summer, however, are as tasty as always. A trip to the grocery store or your local ice cream shop can take you back to those days when your biggest decision was one scoop or two.



Hold the dairy



Not everyone can, or wants to, eat dairy products, but they still want the ice cream experience. Fortunately, there are a number of alternatives that let you eat ice cream without the cream.

Turtle Mountain offers four lines of nondairy frozen treats: Purely Decadent, organic It's So Delicious, Soy Delicious (sweetened with a blend of fruit concentrates, brown rice, and tapioca syrup), and fat-free, soy-free, fruit-sweetened Sweet Nothing frozen novelties. Turtle Mountain products can be found at Pick 'n Save, Roundy's, Whole Foods, and Woodman's. Check their website for more information and locations at www.turtlemountain.com.

OatsCream is produced by American Oats, based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. It's available as soft serve as well as hard pack. OatsCream is dairy-free, cholesterol-free, low-fat, and vegan. It's not organic but they're working on it.

Tofutti makes a number of products, but their flagship is a dairy-free ice cream substitute. This soy-based dessert has been around for years and comes in a variety of flavors. You can get Tofutti at Copp's, Willy Street Co-op, Whole Foods, and Pick n' Save to name a few. Their website (www.tofutti.com) has a store locator.

Rice Dream frozen desserts are part of a line of products that has been around since 1971. As the name implies, they are rice-based and so offer different health benefits from soy-based. These all-natural treats contain no refined sweeteners, no cholesterol, and are lactose free. Go to www.tastethedream.com for a store locator.

• IF YOU GO •

Babcock Hall Dairy Store

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Phone: (608) 262-3045
foodsci.wisc.edu/store

**Chocolate Shoppe Ice Cream Company
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Schoep's Ice Cream

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