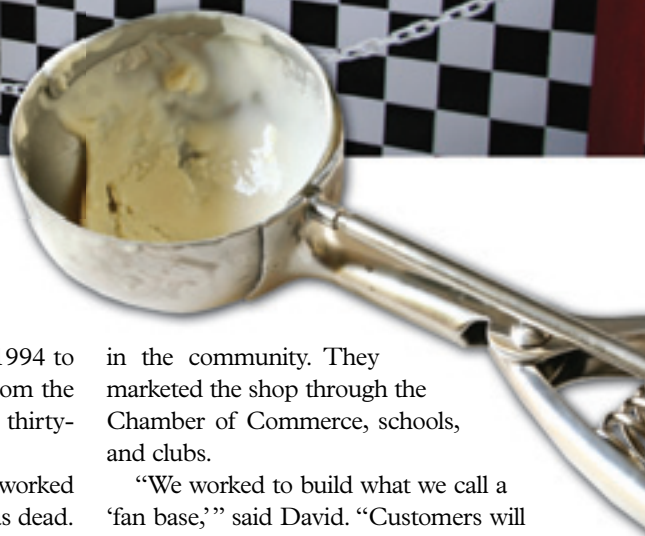




Cone Heads and Sundae Divers

America so loves ice cream that it takes a month to celebrate



by Chelle Koster Walton

What is it about ice cream that makes you feel like a kid outside and so good inside? Is it merely the sweet tooth satisfaction? Or the endless variety of flavors? The way it melts on your tongue? The brain freeze? The sugar rush?

“You don’t just come to buy ice cream,” says David Zimmermann, who with wife Sarah owns Royal Scoop Homemade Ice Cream in Bonita Springs. “It’s a whole experience you share with your family, friends or a date. The quality needs to be worth returning for.”

To celebrate National Ice Cream Month in July, we talked to ice cream makers and lovers to get the “scoop” on America’s addiction to ice cream.

PORTRAIT OF AN ICE CREAM PARLOR

Complete with black-and-white tiles, a neon sign, and rows of booths, Royal Scoop epitomizes our childhood visions of slurping ice cream at the corner shop. Opened in 1979, it is Bonita Springs’ oldest. Under David and Sarah Zimmermann’s ownership, it has expanded from four thousand square

feet when they bought it in July 1994 to four times that size. Staff went from the two Zimmermans to more than thirty-five today.

“When we first bought it, we worked around the clock, but the place was dead. I noticed the doctor next door was working eight-hour weeks to our eighty, and I told my wife, ‘Honey, we must have missed career day.’”

David, a former accounting-finance guy, and Sarah, an ad and marketing professional, set out to get themselves known

in the community. They marketed the shop through the Chamber of Commerce, schools, and clubs.

“We worked to build what we call a ‘fan base,’” said David. “Customers will come and go, but we needed to create relationships with people who would come back again and again.” The strategy worked, evident as he walks through the shop and calls customers by name. In the back, staff operates two batch machines to turn out upwards of 930 two and one-



Checkered tiles and a freezer full of flavors make Royal Scoop a classic (top). Black cherry ice cream, the finished product (bottom).

TOP PHOTO BY BRIAN STROMLUND; BOTTOM PHOTO BY CHELLE KOSTER WALTON

half gallon tubs a week.

The Zimmermanns inherited many of their recipes from the previous owners but changed them according to their own ice cream-addicted tastes, which often meant upgrading the ingredients.

Their cocoa powder, for instance, comes from a dairy in Tampa. Instead of just throwing pecans into their signature Royal Turtle and popular butter pecan, they use roasted, salted, buttered pecans for extra flavor. "They're worth exercising for, they're so good," says David.

Their chocolate chips are specially formulated for a lower melting point. "Regular chocolate chips turn to rock when frozen. These allow the chocolate to melt on your tongue so you get the taste and mouth feel."

Royal Scoop sells forty-six flavors in regular, dairy-free sorbet, yogurt, and sugar-free forms in its shop. Much of the product, however, goes to other stores in the area. They also do special orders for local country clubs and other food operations, and make more than one hundred flavors in all, including custom flavors such as lychee nut, tomato basil, and mango jalapeno.

"Eating ice cream never ceases to be a fun experience," says the owner, who admits to indulging at least once a day.

ICE CREAM MONTH AT ROYAL SCOOP

One of the promotions that the Zimmermanns designed to draw attention to their off-the-beaten-path shop on Vanderbilt Beach Road is an annual celebration of National Ice Cream Month. Throughout July, they offer free tours of their ice cream-making operation and eighteen-degrees-below-zero walk-in freezer, where Florida kids love running around in the cold.

On National Ice Cream Day, this year July 19, they give away free scoops to the first one hundred people in the door and hold a raffle where the prize is free ice cream for a year. Royal Scoop also hosts a blood drive that day, and donors get one free pint of ice cream in exchange for a pint of blood.

The Scoop: 239-992-2000, Eighth St. and Vanderbilt Dr., south of Bonita Beach Rd.

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The advertisement features a blue background with a central photograph of an outdoor dining area with people seated at tables under a pergola. The Blue Giraffe logo is a stylized giraffe head.

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The advertisement features a woman with long dark hair holding a martini glass with a strawberry. In the top right corner, there is a plate of sushi. The word 'pearl' is written in a large, stylized font with a glowing blue pearl inside the letter 'a'.



A THIRTY-YEAR ISLAND TRADITION

Pinocchio's Original Homemade Italian Ice Cream has been using the same Italian recipes to please island visitors and residents for nearly thirty years. Current owners Tom and Donna Puma use a Carpigiani Italian batch ice cream machine, which is "considered the best," according to Tom.

Pinocchio's processes 130 different flavors, all made on-site, and displays twenty-two at any given time in the store—the only place the highly exclusive ice cream is available. Besides Sanibel Krunch, Dirty Sand Dollar—caramel ice cream with malted milk balls and chocolate flakes—wins raves. The shop also serves sorbets, sherbets, and low-fat, low-carb,

Tom and Donna Puma, owners of thirty-year-old Pinocchio's Homemade Ice Cream (above). Beach Walk Sundae at Pinocchio's (bottom left).

sugar-free, and fat-free varieties, plus ice cream specialty drinks and inventive sundaes. Below, the Pumas share a recipe for one of their most fun island sundaes.

Beach Walk Sundae

- Two scoops of Pinocchio's Dirty Sand Dollar ice cream
- chocolate syrup to taste
- whipped cream
- malted milk balls

Top ice cream with chocolate and whipped cream. Crush malted milk balls and sprinkle over top of whipped cream.

The Scoop: 239-472-6566, 362 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel Island, www.pinocchiooicecream.com.



ICE CREAM FOR YOUR FEET

Sanibel Harbour Resort & Spa's Ice Cream Pedicure scoops in the "ice cream" without the guilt (sorry, but this does not actually involve *eating* ice cream). Choose a "cool" scoop of ice cream-flavored and -shaped fizzy bath salts—chocoholic, strawberry-kiwi, vanilla purity, or the popular gotta-have-it-pomegranate—to moisturize and nurture your feet with vitamins A, C, and D. Your esthetician follows that with a generous dollop of sugar-based Sherbet Scrub to cleanse and exfoliate. After an invigorating foot mask, your tootsies are lavished with "body icing" that comes in the same "flavors" as the Ice Cream Scoops. Cost: \$65.

The Scoop: 239-466-2156, www.sanibel-resort.com.

ICE CREAM-MAKERS' PICKS

What's their favorite flavor?

David Zimmermann, Royal Scoop, Bonita Springs - "I can't decide between our Royal Turtle and Cookie Dough, so I like to mix them together."

Ray George, The Love Boat, Fort Myers Beach - Heath Bar



Love Boat is one of Lee County's oldest homemade ice cream shops.

Queenie Viglione, Queenie's Real Homemade Ice Cream (distributed throughout Lee County)—"The one that is in front of me at the time." (As we went to press that was her latest "crazy delicious" flavor: peanut butter and "indent-sized" chocolate chips.)

Tom Puma, Pinocchio's Original Homemade Italian Ice Cream, Sanibel Island - "Our most popular flavor, Sanibel Krunch" (house-made vanilla ice cream with toasted coconut enrobed in chocolate, gourmet mixed nuts, and other secret ingredients).

Chelle KosterWalton, Times of the Islands Travel & Cuisine Editor, reviews more local restaurants in her Sarasota, Sanibel Island & Naples Book.



TOP PHOTO BY CHELLE KOSTERWALTON

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