

# — THE — ANN ARBOR NEWS

Anne Arbor News  
February 11, 2005

## Custom creamery Howell's newest ice cream parlor specializes in made-to-order 'goodies'

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Cold Stone Creamery, in the Crossroads Town Center at M-59 and Oak Grove Road in Howell - the area's newest ice cream store - may also well be its most unique. What makes Cold Stone Creamery different is that the "goodies" are custom-mixed to order on a refrigerated, polished granite slab, right before the customer's eyes. The product has a semi-soft consistency, making it easier to blend in the extra ingredients. In addition to 18 ice cream flavors, the customer has a choice of several different fruits such as strawberry, banana and pineapple along with nuts, cookies, chocolate chips, brownies and all sorts of candy choices from sprinkles to Snickers and Butterfingers bars to M&Ms and Gummi Bears.

Customers Chris and Kristine Fenton of Brighton, who had visited Cold Stone Creamery outlets in other cities, learned of the new location in Livingston County at the company's Web site ([www.coldstonecreamery.com](http://www.coldstonecreamery.com)).

"It's delicious, they are unique flavors," says Kristine Fenton, adding the ice cream is practically a meal in itself, "You have to be hungry when you come here," she says.

"They're really creative with what they do," adds Chris Fenton.

Generous helpings of the ice cream have been dispensed to what are frequently long lines since the Howell store opened a couple weeks ago. Co-owners Monique and Mike Bergin of Marion Township, had always wanted to have a business of their own, and thought a franchise was the perfect opportunity. Monique runs the day-to-day operations and Mike, a manager at the Mount Brighton ski area, helps out whenever possible.

Monique Bergin calls the store a "fun and family-friendly" place where everyone, including the staff of 24, has a good time. In fact, the mostly teenage work crew will belt out one of 30 songs they have memorized if a customer requests a song or it's a patron's birthday.

Upon entering the shop patrons are given a plastic spoonful of their selection, and asked to sample it. "You take a bite, and if you don't absolutely love it, the (employee) will make up whatever you like," Bergin says.

The store also has ice cream cakes for birthdays and other special occasions. Besides cones, customers may choose from sodas, sundaes, shakes, malts, floats and smoothies, and frozen yogurt is available for the calorie-conscious.

Cold Stone Creamery, with headquarters in Scottsdale, Ariz., has 915 stores in 46 states, the Caribbean and Guam, and recorded \$285 million in 2004 sales, up 83 percent from 2003. The firm, with 400 stores slated to open this year, is the nation's fastest-growing ice cream store chain, and the new Howell outlet is store No. 21 in Michigan.

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