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## Looking for a reason to scream? Ice cream in T-town

Eric Mann tries to discover the leaders in ice cream supremacy in Tuscaloosa. From custard to yogurt and from old school to new kid on the block, the ice cream scene in Tuscaloosa is a cool place to be.

*-- Eric Mann, assistant arts and entertainment editor*

Ice cream has become a big business in Tuscaloosa, and Dairy Queen, Papa's College Custard, TCBY and the new Cold Stone Creamery are frontrunners in the race for ice cream dominance.

I set out on a mission to find out which one of these purveyors of ice cream has the tastiest product, the best prices, the friendliest service and the overall best experience, hoping not to destroy my figure.

TCBY, which stands for "The Country's Best Yogurt," was the first stop on my mission. TCBY not only serves yogurt, but also 16 different flavors of ice cream. I was told that their best selling ice cream flavor was cookies and cream or butter pecan. I chose to sample the cookies and cream, since butter pecan has always sounded gross to me. My ice cream was nothing special, but nothing terrible either, and for just over \$2, I was pleased with my purchase.

The next stop was the proverbial "oldie but goodie" Dairy Queen. The combination of low prices (a small cup of ice cream cost me 89 cents) and my childhood favorite soft serve ice cream made things seem promising.

The atmosphere at Dairy Queen is different from the other places I visited. I happened to catch one customer as he said, "this place is straight out of the 70s," commenting on the building that was in bad need of a remodeling job.

Dairy Queen, despite the change in atmosphere, has high quality soft serve ice cream, and also sells foods like cheeseburgers, chicken fingers and several different types of sandwiches.

My next stop was Papa's College Custard. At the door, I was greeted by a life-size plastic cow standing on its hind legs. It could easily scare me, or young children. The threatening cow told me the flavor of the day was butter pecan. Again, I opted for something other than butter pecan, sampling the chocolate vanilla swirl.

Papa's College Custards sells custard, not ice cream. Custard is much creamier than regular ice cream, making it seem more filling and a little thicker. I was not that impressed with the

custard, but noticed several other things on the menu that sounded wonderful. For instance, had I not been full of ice cream already, I would have purchased something called a "College Crusher," a mix of custard and any number of add-ins collected in a drink cup.

The service at Papa's also stood out. I noticed the employees bringing out orders to elderly customers and my cashier was especially friendly.

Finally, I made a stop at the brand new Cold Stone Creamery on the Strip, next to Qdoba. I was greeted by a line that stretched fifteen feet and reached the door. Usually, a line such as this one means unhappy customers and bad service, but in this line, everyone seemed happy to be there. When I tasted my Berry Berry Berry Good, I knew why they were happy. The ice cream was absolutely delicious.

The Berry Berry Berry Good is one of Cold Stone's Original concoctions, consisting of sweet cream ice cream, raspberries, strawberries and blueberries. There are a multitude of other mixes available for prices ranging from just over \$3 to around \$5.

I asked Davey Helms, a freshman criminal justice major, what he thought about the new Cold Stone Creamery.

"I love how they make everything in front of you. I got cake batter ice cream with brownie pieces and they mixed it all up right in front of me," he said.

And by the way, if you tip the employees at Cold Stone, they'll sing an original Cold Stone version of a catchy song. For instance, while I was in the store, I heard the Cold Stone version of "The Flintstones" theme song.

"The singing is another of my favorite things about Cold Stone, it helps provide such a friendly atmosphere," Helms said.

The ice cream market in Tuscaloosa is becoming quite competitive, with Cold Stone Creamery giving Dairy Queen, TCBY and Papa's College Custard a run for their money.

In the end, I choose Cold Stone over the rest. The ice cream is wonderful, the place is clean and the employees are friendly and ready to sing a catchy tune at any given moment.

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