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Cold Stone Creamery: Ice cream to scream for

By Scott Cissel

The new Cold Stone Creamery, in Leesburg, is an adventure in ice-cream making, mixing and eating. "We can make just about any flavor that's out there," said shop owner Tom Coogan. "We'll mix it on the stone."

All of the ice cream is made in house, and customers can choose from a variety of nuts, fruits and candy to mix into dollops of ice cream on a slab of granite chilled to 16 degrees.

Coogan's shop opened Dec. 1, and is one of the newest in the nationwide franchise of more than 550 stores. A 19-year veteran of the mortgage banking industry, Coogan was inspired during a visit to a Cold Stone Creamery with his sons in Arizona, where the company was founded in 1988.

"I was sitting there enjoying my ice cream, and I was thinking, 'We don't we have anything like this back east.'" said Coogan.

He knew he was ready to change his career path, so he and his wife, Arden, researched the Cold Stone Creamery and decided to open one for themselves.

"This is a complete 180 degrees from what I was doing," Coogan said.

His shop is one of three Cold Stones in Northern Virginia. One is already open in Fair Oaks, and a third will soon open in Vienna.

Cold Stone ice cream has a puffy, smooth and creamy texture that is produced by rapid cooling in a blast freezer at 35 degrees below zero. After the blast freezing, the ice cream is kept at 3 degrees for at least four hours to allow it to gradually soften.

Flavors include standards like chocolate, French vanilla, mint, sweet cream, and some specialized flavors like Cake Batter, cheesecake and white chocolate. Nonfat frozen yogurt is also available. Some of the concoctions customers can order include Nights in White Chocolate, Fruit Stand Rendezvous, Mud Pie Mojo and Butter Finger Fumble.

Servings come in three sizes: Like It, Love it and Gotta Have It.

Mixing ingredients include M&M's, Oreos, roasted almonds, pecan pralines, sponge cake, strawberries and more.

"We don't have pickles, but if somebody wants some we'll run over to Shoppers and get some," said Coogan.

All of the daily-made waffle-cake cones and bowls are spiced with cinnamon, and the smell of baking batter fills the shop.

"It's a pleasant aroma," said Coogan.

Coogan, whose favorite flavor is mint chocolate chip, said he thinks the unusual ice cream texture, as well as the freedom to choose just about any combination, is a big draw to the shop.

Cold Stone has other favorites like shakes, malts, smoothies, cakes and pies. For takeout, ice cream containers are available in pint, quart and bucket-size containers.

Coogan said the shop has already produced 1,500 desserts since it opened. On opening day the shop raised \$1,000 for the Make-A-Wish Foundation. In July 2004, look out for "The World's Largest Ice Cream Social," a Cold Stone event where it offers free ice cream.

The hiring process for "crew members" at the shop reflects the creative spirit of its ice cream concoctions -- prospective staff members are asked to sing and show off their talent in a three-minute session called "bust a move."

"We've had kids do cartwheels," said Coogan.

Auditions have already been held for prospective employees at Frederick Douglass Community Center in Leesburg.

And although 20 part-time staff have already been hired, Coogan said he may conduct another audition next month. Cold Stone Creamery is at 1013 Edwards Ferry Road in the Battlefield Shopping Center, between Quiznos and Starbucks.

Profile

Business: Cold Stone Creamery
Location: 1013 Edwards Ferry Road, Battlefield Shopping Center, Leesburg
Opened: Dec. 1, 2003
Hours: Sunday to Thursday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., and Friday and Saturday, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.
Phone: 703-443-8100