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## **Ice cream business is hot at Cold Stone Creamery**

**BY:** Liz Kohman

The flavors, toppings, texture and mix-ins keep customers coming back for more. If you think the people at Cold Stone Creamery will share their secret recipe for ice cream that is thick yet light, rich and creamy, then you are sadly mistaken.

You can ask politely, but they won't cave.

Instead, they'll offer free samples.

What about the equipment? How is the ice cream made? Equipment is imported from Italy and the process is classified. They will tell you this with a smile.

But the final product - not the process - is what keeps the customers coming back to **Cold Stone**. The fresh ice cream mixed with candies, nuts and other toppings on a cold stone is what they're after.

Some of the customers are casual about their interest in ice cream, others are down right obsessed, trekking out in the dark, on cold winter evenings and braving brutal wind chills for their small scoop of double dutch chocolate with Heath bar in a waffle bowl or their large dish of lemon sorbet with raspberries and almonds.

"We have users that come in three or four times a week," said Jean Justin, who owns Cold Stone with her husband, Mark. "We call them by name."

### **10-Pan Alley**

The store opened in St. Cloud in late September - just in time for the coldest months in Minnesota, but that wasn't due to poor planning on the part of the owners.

"We felt that it would give us time to work out the kinks," Justin said.

And if business is slow due to cold weather, then the summer is going to be crazy busy for the Cold Stone crew.

The store sells about 10 pans of ice cream per day, and there's about 21/2 gallons of ice cream in a pan. Workers dish up more than 500 waffle cones and bowls in a week. On busy Friday nights, the staff turns on the air conditioning because the shop is so warm with body heat, Justin said.

Freshly baked brownies and waffle cones give the store a sugary-sweet smell. (The scent is so recognizable, that Justin was once asked if she worked at Cold Stone when she went shopping after a shift. "I thought I smelled you," was the reply to her affirmative response.)

### **You batter, you bet**

The store's newest flavor, Cake Batter, made its debut about a month ago.

"You're going to want to lick your ice cream bowl as much as you lick the cake bowl and spatula," Justin said.

Including the Cake Batter, there are always 13 flavors of ice cream, 2 varieties of sorbet and 3 kinds of yogurt available. The creamery also has 13 extract flavors - including Irish cream, orange and pecan praline - allowing customers to request other ice cream flavors.

The mix-ins, including fresh nuts, frozen fruit, hot fudge and other toppings, give depth to the ice cream, making it possible for customers to layer flavors. The store record for the highest number of mix-ins added to one dish of ice cream is 11.

The store also offers ice cream in the form of cakes and pies and recently took its first order for a wedding cake, Justin said.

Mark and Jean Justin decided to join the Cold Stone franchise because they were looking for a business to compliment the income from their farm. The couple raises about 22,000 turkeys for Jennie-O on their farm in the Darling township in Morrison county near Little Falls.

The nationwide chain of Cold Stone Creameries, includes Minnesota locations in Maple Grove, Block E in Minneapolis, Plymouth, Woodbury and Blaine. New stores are opening in St. Louis Park and Coon Rapids.

### **If you go...**

What: Cold Stone Creamery.

Hours: 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday; 11 a.m.-11 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

Location: 3959 Second Street South, Suite 305.

Contact: 258-3590; [www.coldstonecreamery.com](http://www.coldstonecreamery.com).

### **Creative Creations**

Here's a sampling of the creations available at Cold Stone to get your own creative juices flowing. With about 18 flavors of ice cream, frozen yogurt and sorbet and multiple mix-ins, the potential for combinations is almost limitless.

Founder's Favorite: Sweet Cream Ice Cream with caramel, fudge, brownie and pecans.

Coffee Lovers Only: Coffee Ice Cream with Heath bar, roasted almonds and caramel.

German Chocolate Cake: Double Dutch Chocolate Ice Cream with brownie, pecans, coconut and caramel.

Berry, Berry, Berry Good: Sweet Cream Ice Cream with strawberries, blueberries and raspberries.

Candy sprinkles, white chocolate chips, cookies, candy bars and graham cracker pie crust are among more than 20 dry flavorings that can be added to ice cream.

Fruits and caramel also can be added to the desserts.

**Cold Stone** Creamery is at 3959 2nd St. S, Suite 305 in St. Cloud.

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