

The Ann Arbor News

March 12, 2004

Get creative at Cold Stone Creamery

BY POORNIMA GUPTA AND CATHERINE O'DONNELL

News Business Reporters

How about a coffee ice cream with fudge and caramel? Or a banana ice cream with brownie, roasted almonds and candies?

At Cold Stone Creamery, the new ice cream shop in Saline, you can create your own ice cream. Customers get to select a basic ice cream from 16 flavors and can add a variety of mix-ins. The staff then whisks it all up on a frozen stone, sometimes with a song and dance, and serves it up in a waffle cone or a cup.

The BD's Mongolian Barbeque style choose-your-ingredients concept appears to be catching on. "It's a potpourri for the senses," said Plymouth resident Charley Mulder, who owns the store along with his wife Barb.

The response has been overwhelming, Mulder said. The 1600-square-foot store, which opened last week, gets about 500 people on an average every day.

This is the first store of the Scottsdale, Arizona-based chain in the area. The Mulders, who work for Ford Motor Co, decided on the franchise after a visit to one of the chain's stores. The couple found the concept exciting.

"It is up and coming, fun to do," Mulder said.

Cold Stone serves 16 flavors of ice cream, which are made on site everyday. The Mulders marketed their products by making cold calls at area businesses and giving away samples.

"It is a name that people did not recognize in the area," Mulder said. But nobody turned them away.

Cold Stone Creamery is planning seven more stores in the state, including two in Ann Arbor. The first Ann Arbor store is expected to open next month.

The Mulders will opening a store in Canton next. Charley plans to focus on the store full time once he retires from Ford.

"The cold stone is what I will do for fun afterwards," Mulder said.

Address: 1329 East Michigan Avenue, Saline

Phone: (734) 944-1932

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