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Ice cream server Emily Fissori cracks up Cold Stone Creamery co-owner Kim Alger (background) with her antics. The crew, who sing to customers on occasion, had to audition for their jobs.

*Photo by Dan Bates/The Herald*

## Shop creates made-to-order ice cream mix while you wait

By Kristi O'Harran  
Herald Columnist

Walking into a new ice cream shop in Everett, my smell-o-meter detected the delicious aroma of waffle cones. As I fretted that the mere fragrance could pack 2 pounds onto my plump hips, a spoonful of cake batter was slapped in my palm.

Being a thorough investigative reporter type, I dutifully wrapped my lips around a smidgen of ice cream flavored to taste like batter.

The sample tasted like it just came off a beater blade.

That's the way it is at the new Cold Stone Creamery in Everett, the first franchise in Snohomish County. They make their yogurt, Italian sorbet and ice cream every morning.

You select your flavor, add goodies such as fresh fruit or a Kit Kat candy bar, and the concoction is mulched together on a chilled granite slab, something like a mason mixes mortar for bricks.

If you leave a tip, the crew sings a song, such as "Zip-A-Dee-Doo-Dah."

It's a new dining destination in front of the Olive Garden restaurant across the street from the Everett Mall at 1405 SE Everett Mall Way, Suite B.

The owners, California transplants who arrived two years ago, bought a home near Lake Stevens and set about researching franchises.

"Nobody compared," Kim Alger said. "Cold Stone is well organized and so supportive."

Alger and her fiancé, Dave Eggers, put about \$300,000 into their store.

Though they have almost two dozen employees, they didn't interview any of the applicants. Everyone who wanted a job at Cold Stone Creamery had to audition. Eggers told each to give them their best five seconds. The applicants would sing a bit, and basically "bust a move," she said.

They found a great crew, he said.

Remember Tom Cruise in "Cocktail," when he flipped bottles of booze like fire-tipped batons? Watch the staff at Cold Stone do tricks with their tools to moosh together selections.



The Sutherlands created what they called the ultimate ice cream experience blended on a granite slab chilled to 16 degrees Fahrenheit. The dessert is served in a homemade waffle cone or bowl or formed into a cake or pie.

*Photo by Dan Bates/The Herald*

Choose a mixture from the menu or create your own concoction. Menu offerings include Birthday Cake Remix made with cake batter ice cream mixed with fresh-baked brownies, cold fudge and rainbow sprinkles. Other ideas:

**Oreo Overload:** Sweet cream ice cream with chocolate chips, Oreo cookies and fudge

**Berry Berry Berry Good:** Sweet cream ice cream with raspberries, strawberries and blueberries

**Black Forest Dream:** Chocolate ice cream with cherry pie filling, brownie and fudge

**Dulce de Leche Desire:** French vanilla ice cream with cinnamon, caramel and honey

**Banana Splitacular:** Sweet cream ice cream with roasted almonds, cherry pie filling, banana, pineapple, fudge and whipped topping

**Coffee Lovers Only:** Coffee ice cream with roasted almonds, a Heath bar and caramel

The ice cream creations developed after Donald and Susan Sutherland opened the first Cold Stone Creamery in Arizona in 1988. The first franchise opened in 1995, and there are now more than 400 stores.

There was one ice cream shop near my home when I was in grade school. We went to Dent's in Shoreline after we played in a piano recital, got an attendance award at school or a Scouting badge. There was nothing like getting a banana split for a job well done.

It would have been fun to mix my own blend, because I hate strawberry ice cream -- still do -- and strawberry always came in the split.

Order whatever combo you like at Cold Stone Creamery.

"You can go basic or crazy," Alger said.

"The freakier the better," Eggers said.

"We wanted to own a business where we could have fun," Alger added. "What's better than ice cream?"

You've got me there.