



Ice Cream, A Classic Treat

July 6, 2010

By Christine Schirato, Our Town

Ice cream is a crowd favorite and a simple treat.

"It is so refreshing and people love the variety of flavors. It goes well with everything. It comes in all shapes, sizes and varieties," said George Pisula, Galliker's quality assurance vice president.

The general ice cream recipe is simple by the FDA's standards: be 10 percent fat, weigh 4.5 pounds per gallon and have 1.6 pounds of food value per gallon.

"It is something that everyone enjoys but is not as simple as it seems up front."

There is more to ice cream than meets the eye, including an ingredient that can't be seen.

"By far, the biggest ingredient is air," Pisula said. "It makes it fluffy as well as chewable."

One hundred thirty farms commit their milk to Galliker's. When it arrives at the plant along Donald Lane, they run the milk through a separator. The heavy part drops to the bottom and the cream rises to the top.

It is then pasteurized — heated and cooled — to kill bacteria and then made homogenous, Pisula said.

"Then we freeze it. One of the key things to make ice cream is to freeze it and how you freeze it," he said. "The quicker you get the product frozen, the smaller the ice crystals, the creamier the ice cream. The key is to freeze it as quickly as you can."

The ice cream is sent over to the ice cream department to be flavored, he said.

"This batch of unflavored ice cream can turn into 50 different flavors."

With co-packing with different companies, there are approximately 200 different flavors of ice cream, Pisula said.

Galliker's is licensed to send their ice cream to 17 states, and with co-packing, as far as China.

It is also 100 percent kosher. "Everything we manufacture is kosher," he said.

Galliker's also meets standard to have the Safe Quality Foods certification. "We are at the highest level available," Pisula said. "For something that seems so simple, there is a lot of quality assurance behind the products."

Galliker's most popular flavor is vanilla. "Because vanilla can be transformed into so many different things," he said.

Next in line are butter pecan, Moose Tracks, chocolate and peanut butter cup.

Nationally, Pisula said, strawberry makes the top five, but in this area peanut butter cup makes the cut.

"Anything with peanut butter in western Pennsylvania sells like crazy," he said. "Strawberry in western Pennsylvania is a very poor seller, but anything with peanut butter is a very good seller."

The taste for chocolate also varies on the region.

"People in western Pennsylvania like a very light chocolate. People in eastern Pennsylvania like a darker chocolate. The product in eastern Pennsylvania has twice as much cocoa."

Ice cream is also a product that follows trends. For instance low-carb ice cream was popular with a push for low-carb diets a few years ago, Pisula said.

"Low-carb ice creams were popular with Dr. Atkins' (diet). People get very health conscious and look for low-fat. Then, all of a sudden you get a swing toward more premium products."

Ice cream sales can also follow economic trends, with people buying more store brands during tougher economic times.

"More income, more premium brands."

Galliker's looks to meet customer demands and trends.

But, they also keep the favorites.

"(Ice cream) is kind of like apple pie, it never goes out of style."