

We all Scream

For the pistachio ice cream “mousse” with a bouquet of cocoa, kiwi, lavender and scotch at Argentina’s celebrated Estancia La Figura.

Ice Dreams

Exploring the luxurious world of ice cream

BY DONALD CHARLES RICHARDSON

Stroll through Portofino in the late afternoon. The setting sun sparkles off the Mediterranean and highlights the simple homes and imposing villas on the lush green hillside. On top of the hill, the magnificent Hotel Splendido keeps watch over the Tigullian Gulf. At the wharf, fishermen are tying up their boats. Most of the day tourists have gone. Shopkeepers unwind and chat across the square. But you’ll still find activity at one little shop. In the center of this perfect village, people continue to line up at the Gelateria San Giorgio for Paciuogo.

At the end of World War II when it was hard to get supplies, the owners of Gelateria San Giorgio devised a plan. Each evening, they simply combined the leftovers to make a new ice cream for the next day and named the new creation *Paciuogo* (which means a mixture of several ingredients).

Today, the specialty *mélange*—prepared by hand *sans* artificial flavoring or preservatives—is still in demand, but the blend has been refined. Currently *Paciuogo* includes chocolate ice

cream, fruits ice cream, whipped cream, little pieces of fresh fruit, morellos cherries, and fruit syrup. It’s rich and beautiful; the first time people see this monumental dessert it often evokes spontaneous laughter.

Oh, the wonders of ice cream! It can be anything from a simple children’s treat to an indulgent extravagance for gourmets. “Ice cream is affordable luxury,” says Judiaan Woo, editor-in-chief of *pastrychef.com* a resource sponsored by the French Culinary Institute.

It may not be a ski house in Aspen or a Maserati, but historically, ice cream has been linked to opulence: China’s King Tang is said to have combined ice and milk. The result was imported to Italian and French courts, and finally to America. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson served ice cream to their honored guests.

Today, pastry chefs (there is no fancy French title for “ice cream maker”) everywhere are experimenting and creating often amazing, occasionally curious, combinations of flavors.

In Palme Mallorca opposite El Corte Inglés, sits the Gelateria Ca’n Miquel. The small shop is rumored to be King

Juan Carlos' favorite ice cream parlor (the royal family summer in Mallorca). Few tourists manage to find it, but the locals know it well. Everyone chats with the owner while she offers her customers little spoons to taste from the dozens of flavors.

Almonds brought from the countryside are the basis for traditional ice creams in Mallorca. There are also twenty-five different chocolate ice creams, including a lush dark Bittersweet, and a chocolate mixed with cinnamon, peppers, orange, or ginger. For the ice cream maven searching for newness, Gelateria Ca'n Miquel creates confections featuring onion, tomato, and even (if you're very, very adventurous) Roquefort cheese and grilled prawn.

It's worth a trip to the mountain above Barcelona, Spain, for the unusual ice creams at the Gran Hotel La Florida. Here you'll discover pumpkin, olive oil, or red wine ice creams as well as the decadent Chocolate Passion, which includes a bowl of Black chocolate sauce, decorated with black chocolate painting and topped with spiced bread ice cream. Occasionally, the pastry chef will serve Saffron ice cream, which costs 1,000 euros for 100 grams.

London's famous Fortnum and Mason has recently undergone renovation and opened The Parlor. At this recreation of a 1950's ice cream, you can rub shoulders with the beautiful and fashionable, and indulge in a Knickerbocker Glories. This legendary British dessert made its first appearance 1955. Today's version is a combination of vanilla bean, strawberry and cream ice creams with raspberries, chunks of pineapple, raspberry coulis (a French sauce seasoned with sugar and lemon), topped with whipped cream and candy sugar.

Of course, the United States is devoted to ice cream (July is National Ice Cream Month) and luxury versions are increasingly popular.

In the Midwest, Oberweis

makes what has to be one of the richest ice creams around. They use fresh milk and cream from local family farms to create an 18% butterfat mix. To achieve perfection, Oberweis makes sure their 34 flavors aren't "shocked," by minimizing fluctuations in temperature.

High rollers in Las Vegas can take a break from the casinos to indulge in Tarragon ice cream at the Nobhill restaurant at the MGM Grand. For the winner who really wants to celebrate (or loser who needs consolation), Rick Moonen, head chef at RM Seafood at Mandalay Bay offers the 4X4X2, which contains 16 different kinds of ice cream, including white truffle, rhubarb, and lobster roe ice creams (guests are invited to guess all the flavors).

Italian emigrant Giovanni Bosio opened one of the first American Gelaterias in New York in 1770. A favorite today is Il Laboratorio del Gelato, a tiny shop on Orchard Street. Owner Jon Snyder starts his day at 4 A.M. when he begins creating the day's 12 selections from among 75 different gelatos. Always made in small batches, flavors can include fig, green tea, honey-lavender and the richest coffee imaginable.

Snyder, incidentally, insists gelato is simply Italian for ice cream. However, Woo points out that, "ice cream is ice cream but gelato is a lifestyle."

Perfect for a stroll through Portofino. ♦



Sorbets

The next time you jet off to Monte Carlo, you must dash into the Hotel Metropole for lunch. The famous Joel Robuchon restaurant serves the international set an extraordinary Basil Sorbet to accompany chic salads.

Considered the most sophisticated frozen dessert, Sorbet has always been stylish. Legend has it that the Emperor Nero sent slaves to the mountains to bring back ice, which he had mixed with fruit, thus creating one of the first sorbets. Victorians sometimes served sorbet in the middle of an enormous meal to refresh their guests.

[Sorbet is not indulgent at all,] says pastrychef.com's Judiaan Woo. It's essentially frozen sugar water with flavoring. There's no fat or cream, and it can be extraordinarily elegant.

And there are elegant sorbets indeed: At La Gran Florida, you'll find ginger, coconut, rose petal or champagne sorbet. Il Laboratorio del Gelato makes green apple and watermelon sorbets. You can even chill with wine sorbets. Wine Cellar Sorbet makes six very stylish sorbets, including Sangria Rojo Pinot Noir, Riesling and Champagne.

If you decide, like the emperor of Rome, to make it yourself, you can pretty much create anything you want. Woo advises the addition of more sugar than you probably want. Once the mixture is frozen, it can lose some of its sweetness.