

SUB-ZERO

HEROES



WHAT MAKES ICE CREAM AN INTEGRAL PART OF JUST ABOUT EVERY SPECIAL OCCASION? IN OKLAHOMA, IT'S THE PEOPLE WHO POUR THEIR TIME, LOVE, AND A WHOLE LOT OF HEAVY CREAM INTO EVERY SCOOP THEY SERVE.

By Karlie Ybarra

THE APPEAL OF ice cream is undeniable. As early as 618 B.C.E., King Tang of Sang in China employed almost a hundred men to gather ice to create a cold dish with buffalo milk, flour, and camphor. Thankfully, ice cream preparation has become a lot easier—and tastier—over the years. But why, with all the changes the world has undergone since Tang's time, do kings, kids, and everyone in between still covet a cone on a regular basis?

Frozen confections abound here in Oklahoma. D'licious Pops in Woodward serves several varieties of bubble waffles topped with ice cream and sweet accents including Fruity Pebbles, strawberries, and chocolate sauce.

OklahomaToday.com

55



Treats and Treasures in Talihina gives diners an old-fashioned soda shop experience, complete with a variety of sundaes and floats.

LORI DUCKWORTH

“WHEN LOCALS HAVE VISITORS IN TOWN, THEY BRING THEM HERE TO SHOW OFF.”

Ice cream’s simplicity belies its power. There are few other foods—if any—that have the same ability to evoke such strong sensations. Ask a dozen people what comes to mind, and they’ll give a dozen answers: The intoxicating scent of fresh-baked waffle cones; the swirls of color as a scoop of strawberry melts and mingles with a scoop of mint chocolate chip; that tinny, cloying melody beckoning from an ice cream truck’s loudspeaker; that first, icy lick—a perfect antidote for the scorching sun. The taste is a little harder to encapsulate. It’s sweet, but also so much more. Ice cream tastes like that last school bell before summer break. It tastes like a birthday party or a vacation at the beach. It tastes like the carefree joy that comes so naturally to children—but that adults so rarely get to experience.

Making ice cream isn’t necessarily difficult, but crafting a scoop of feelings is tricky. As usual, there’s a select group of Oklahomans who excel in the face of a good challenge.



AS THE GATEWAY to one of America’s most beautiful scenic drives, Talihina attracts thousands of travelers seeking the freedom of the open road each year. Though it’s not yet as big a draw as the Talimena National Scenic Byway, Treats and Treasures is becoming a destination all its own. When Rhonda Sears and her mother opened the shop in 1993, their vision was to have an old-fashioned soda fountain—and they found a vintage 1947 model they still use to this day. They’ve

since added a full menu including diner staples like burgers, chicken sandwiches, and daily specials (the chicken pot pie in a sourdough bread bowl is worth the drive alone). But they never gave up that 1940s soda fountain or the delightful creations it helps bring to life.

Sears and her team sling favorites like root beer floats, chocolate malts, and banana splits in traditional glass dishes, but they also customize treats on request. Their popular Tiger Shake—chocolate, caramel, and peanut butter—started as a local cheerleader’s regular order and was named for the high school mascot. When another guest asked for an ice cream soda with lime, Sears whipped it up from scratch, as she does most things. The next year, that customer brought back a bag of limes with her from California as a thank you.

Delicious as the treats aspect of her business may be, Sears is probably most proud of the treasured memories her guests take with them.

“When locals have visitors in town, they bring them here to show off,” she says. “Grandparents will bring their grandkids to have some old-fashioned ice cream and visit a living museum.”

Nostalgia isn’t the watchword at the Tai-Okie food truck in Oklahoma City and Ada. In fact, many Okies probably haven’t heard of *taiyaki*, the Japanese snack for which the truck is named. Owners Dylan Lollar and his fiancé Giselle Ixchu stumbled across *taiyaki*—a filled, fish-shaped pastry—and rolled ice cream for the first time during trips to Japan and Thailand.

“I got home and immediately ordered a cold plate,” Lollar says. “I’ve had a passion for it ever since.”

Tai-Okie’s treats prove Lollar and Ixchu’s passion. They bake the flaky fish-shaped puff pastries each morning. They then fill the tails with Nutella and dust the whole thing with cinnamon and sugar. Next come three perfect cylinders of ice cream in flavors like taro, Oreo, banana cookie butter, brownie batter, mango, and more. Cookies, candy, or cereal like Speculoos, Teddy Grahams, Pocky, and Fruity Pebbles add crunch. Finally, one of a selection of flavorful drizzles seals each fish’s delicious fate.



The Tai-Okie truck in Oklahoma City and Ada specializes in Asian-inspired creations served in fish-shaped, cinnamon-and-sugar-dusted puff pastries filled with Nutella.

LORI DUCKWORTH

CAPITALS ICE CREAM



Breakfast cereals are popular mix-ins at Capitals Ice Cream in Oklahoma City.

BRENT FUCHS



Jennifer Yocham owns Mrs. Jen's Ice Cream Emporium in Crescent.

VALERIE WEHHAAS



Big Dipper Creamery in Tulsa offers unique flavors like Honeycomb Lavender and Vegan Blueberry Lemon alongside classics like Dark Chocolate and Fresh Mint Chip. Big Dipper plans to open a new shop in Sand Springs this summer.



ALSO HOPING TO improve upon the traditional waffle cone, Jennifer Yocham takes a less scaly but equally satisfying approach.

At Mrs. Jen's Ice Cream Emporium in Crescent, the smell of bubble waffles baking on the griddle greets customers like a warm embrace. Onto these soft bases, Yocham piles two scoops of ice cream, toppings, and chocolate or vanilla whipped cream. Though she sells organic candies, unique sodas, and edible cookie dough, it's the combination of ice cream and enthusiasm

for her small town that have made Mrs. Jen's a hit—despite the fact that she opened in August 2020 in the throes of a pandemic. "The day we opened, we had a line down the block," Yocham says. "Some people waited two hours. For the first two months, we sold out almost weekly. Even in the winter, we did relatively well. We have a great little community."

Sami Cooper has found her own little community, though it's united not by geography but a desire to provide Tulsans with delicious food and economic development.

After working at an ice cream shop in Portland, Oregon, Cooper dreamed of owning her own place, but world travel

came first. While she and her husband lived in Vietnam and Morocco, they polished their know-how of flavors and seasonal ingredients. When the couple returned to Oklahoma in 2015, Cooper started the Big Dipper Creamery cart. Hoping to expand her vision, Cooper enrolled in the Kitchen 66 program, which helps small businesses get off the ground. When that same organization developed the Mother Road Market food hall in 2019, they invited Big Dipper to take over one of their coveted storefronts. The move was a boon not only for Cooper but for all Tulsans with functional taste buds. Flavors like Ooey Goey Buttercake, Midnight Oreo,

and Vegan Blueberry Lemon help make Big Dipper's ice cream creative yet comforting, interesting but oh-so-satisfying.

"The ice cream base that we use has a lot of butterfat, which is really important, because the higher the butterfat, the more flavor you can pack in," Cooper says.

To that base, Cooper and her team add ingredients from the Cherry Street Farmers' Market—when they don't make their own. For one of Big Dipper's best-selling flavors, Honeycomb Lavender, for example, they craft small batches of honeycomb candy and steep lavender buds in sweet cream for forty hours. The result tastes and smells like the sweetest spring day.



TRAVELING WEST ON U.S. Highway 412 from Tulsa, there's another shop that's not afraid to get a little funky with flavor. At D'licious Pops in Woodward, customers can order a scoop of Ferrero Rocher, horchata, Neon Mermaid—a mix of strawberry, blueberry, and vanilla—or more than thirty other types of ice cream. Owners and sisters Sonia, Marilu, and Dely Carrasco also make their own sorbet using cucumbers, pineapple, and Pulparindo—a Mexican candy made with tamarind.

The unicorn bubble waffle treat is one of many beautiful and delectable menu items at D'licious Pops in Woodward.

LORIDUCKWORTH



THERE'S ONE NAME ABOVE ALL IN OKLAHOMA ICE CREAM. SAY IT LOUD, SAY IT PROUD.

Ask any Okie their go-to place for ice cream, and there's a good chance they'll exclaim, without hesitation, "Braum's!" It's virtually impossible—and possibly sacrilegious—to discuss frozen confections in the Sooner State without acknowledging the dairy juggernaut. Our official song may be Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Oklahoma!," but the soothing refrain of "from our farm to our store . . . only Braum's gives you so much more" is deeply imprinted on the red dirt of Oklahomans' brains from birth.

Like many of the state's most beloved icons, Braum's got its start elsewhere. During the Great Depression, Henry H. Braum started processing butter and milk in his hometown of Emporia, Kansas. While Henry continued expanding his business, he also taught his son Bill everything he knew. In 1952, Bill—fresh from business school—and his father established the Peter Pan Ice Cream retail chain, which was named for a park in Emporia.

Bill purchased the company from his father in 1961. He sold Peter Pan in 1967 but kept the family dairy herd and processing plant. The following year, Bill and his wife Mary opened the first Braum's Ice Cream and Dairy store in Oklahoma City. As the company grew, the Braums moved their operations—and herd of nine hundred cows—to their new farm in Tuttle. The company built a 260,000-square-foot processing plant in 1987 and by 1993 had constructed one of the largest milking operations in the world.

Now, nearly three hundred Braum's locations in Oklahoma, Kansas, Texas, Missouri, and Arkansas serve old-fashioned favorites like strawberry shakes alongside innovative flavors like fried caramel toffee pie. But no matter what customers order, they're sure to get so much more.

“WHATEVER REASON CUSTOMERS HAVE FOR COMING IN, WE’RE HOPING THAT THEY HAVE A BETTER DAY AFTER THEY’VE HAD OUR ICE CREAM.”



STEVEN WALKER

La Vita é Bella

Oklahomans have been screaming for ice cream for years, but pleas for gelato have become increasingly common.

“I was curious why gelato wasn’t really in America that much,” says Mike Bausch, co-owner of **STG Gelateria** in Tulsa and Broken Arrow. “The answer boiled down to how expensive the specialty equipment is and how much longer it takes to make.”

Gelato, a dessert originating in Italy, starts with a base similar to ice cream. But it typically uses milk instead of cream, and it’s churned at a slower speed. The resulting confection is denser with less air—and therefore more flavor. Rather than coating the tongue in fat, gelato also allows consumers to taste the delicate ingredients in their cup and save calories versus a similar serving of ice cream.

At STG, the staff makes gelato in micro batches—about four or five pans worth at a time. Biscoff cookie, *Banoffee*—a combination of banana cream pie and toffee—Caramello Machiatto, and amaretto are just a few of the 150 flavors they’ve come up with so far. But it’s not just a delicious dessert the folks at STG aim to serve. They want their guests to feel like they’ve had a Roman holiday.

“The biggest thing for us is to take that person, that customer who’s been to Italy, and give them

an authentic experience,” Bausch says. “This isn’t just our best effort: It’s the exact same thing.”

**STG GELATERIA
CHERRY STREET**
➤ 1601 East Fifteenth Street in Tulsa
➤ (918) 619-6145

**STG GELATERIA
BROKEN ARROW**
➤ 217 South Main Street
in Broken Arrow
➤ (918) 957-1910
➤ stgitalian.com

In addition to having more flavors than Baskin-Robbins, the Carrascos also offer some inventive delivery methods: sundaes, splits, and shakes; bubble waffles; ice cream cakes; or topped with homemade *chamoy* gummy worms or other candy. But D’licious Pops couldn’t lay claim to the name without an impressive array of treats on a stick.

Sonia says customers young and old are drawn to her pops because they’re just so pretty. Paw prints, hand-painted unicorn horns, shimmering mermaid scales, and painstakingly decorated doughnuts certainly are enticing. But one bite of creamy banana pop filled with Nutella, and it’s the tongue’s turn to be dazzled.

Though the medium may be different, tantalizing taste buds is what Capitals Ice Cream in Oklahoma City does best. When college friends Connor Cox, Ibsen Crespo, and brothers Layne and Landon Ferguson opened their first shop in Midtown on May 18, 2018, they had a line out the door.

For the rest of that summer, foodies flocked to Capitals—and then to its sister shop, Cities, when it opened in Edmond in 2019—to try the small but well-curated menu. Oklahoma-centric names are the cherry on top of modern sundaes like Oklahoma Standard, a combination of fudge brownie, peanut butter, and chocolate drizzle. The Great Salt Plains features caramel, pretzels, and pecans. With cookie butter, a chocolate chip cookie, cookie dough, and choco-

late drizzle, Cookies Conquer All more than lives up to its name.

“Whatever reason customers have for coming in—celebration, just treating yourself, helping get through something—we’re hoping that they have a better day after they’ve had our ice cream,” Layne Ferguson says.



SERVING SMILES IS exactly what Courtney Barber and her husband Aaron wanted to do when they purchased their first Scoops Ice Cream truck in 2015. On weekends, the Barbers would drive around Enid, playing their siren song, attracting hordes of hungry children and nostalgic adults to their window for a birthday cake pop, Choco Taco, or other handheld frozen delicacy.

Soon, the Barbers needed a second truck to keep up with their patrols and private bookings. Eventually, they relocated Scoops’ operations to Oklahoma City, purchased a small fleet of trucks, and hired a team of drivers. Scoops’ success could be attributed to the array of treats—they carry about thirty-five varieties—or their low price points. Courtney makes a concerted effort to keep plenty of one-dollar items in stock. But for the owner, it’s about something more than ice cream.

Courtney Barber of Scoops brings ice cream to the people of Oklahoma City and Enid via van.



MOSS PHOTOGRAPHY



Ice cream sandwiches, floats, sundaes, and single scoops are on the menu at Roxy's Ice Cream Social in Oklahoma City.

"It's a simple joy," she says. "Kids are excited to see and hear the truck; it puts a smile on their faces. It's that innocence and nostalgia we had growing up, running up to an ice cream truck, and now they get to experience that."

Like Scoops, Raena and Shane Mutz of Roxy's Ice Cream Social got their start bringing joy in a truck to the masses. Beginning in 2012, the truck with the three-dimensional strawberry waffle cone paint job and named for a beloved Great Dane became legendary for delivering homemade salted caramel, cookies and cream—which features two kinds of cookies—mint chocolate, and dozens more luscious flavors of ice cream.

Since opening four brick-and-mortar locations in Oklahoma City and Edmond, Roxy's has expanded its menu to include fountain drinks, floats, fresh-baked cookie sandwiches, and sundaes. Regardless of what meteorologists say, summer starts when you've had a s'mores sundae with graham cracker ice cream, hot fudge, and marshmallow whipped cream.

The Mutzes also have introduced more than eighty varieties of ice cream, sherbet, and sorbet so every taste and dietary need is accounted for. Vegan German chocolate; Oatmeal Cream; Green Apple; Red, White, and Blueberry for Independence Day: More than seventy rotating daily and seasonal flavors have kept Roxy's customers coming back for nearly a decade.

"Some of our employees came to the truck when they were ten years old, and now they work for us," Raena says. "We'd go to birthday parties for two, three, four year olds, and get to see them as they grow up. We've had a wedding at our Plaza District location, and so many engagements. It's crazy to think of the impact on people's lives."

Milk, sugar, and flavoring: It's not the ingredients that make each trip to get ice cream a special occasion in its own right. The dedication, passion, and creativity confectioners put into every scoop: That's what satisfies Oklahomans' hearts. 🍦



TREATS AND TREASURES

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- (918) 567-2410
- facebook.com/treatstalihina

TAI-OKIE FOOD TRUCK

- facebook.com/taiookie
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MRS. JEN'S ICE CREAM EMPORIUM

- 211 North Grand Street in Crescent
- facebook.com/mrsjensicecreamemporium
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- Inside Mother Road Market*
- 1124 South Lewis Avenue in Tulsa
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 - bigdippercreamerytulsa.com

D'LICIOUS POPS

- 1911 Main Street in Woodward
- (580) 290-5056
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CAPITALS ICE CREAM

- 1006 North Hudson Avenue in Oklahoma City
- (405) 600-9966
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