In search of the ideal ice cream

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whipped cream topping (not a non-dairy imposter), and after a brief skirmish to decide whether the cherry should be judged by all four judges or whether one judge could do the honors, the judges dug in.

"Ooh," said Refrigerator Mouth, "the fudge tastes like fudge!"

"It does," agreed Banana Hater. "It's nice and heavy, like a candy bar."

"Ugghh!"exclaimed Conehead. "Who wants to eat a candy bar frozen and hot at the same time? The ice cream is overpowered by the flavor of the topping. I can't taste it."

And with that, the judges examined the Irish Coffee cone.

"The scoop looks small. Mmmm, very distinctive. I can taste coffee . . ."

"And *rum!*" spat out the Banana Hater. "I don't like rum."

"You get the rum taste first and then the coffee taste after. I wonder how they do that?" wondered Conehead.

"We're talking authentic coffee here," said Banana Hater.

"We're talking *cold* here. Aauggh!" said Refrigerator Mouth as Irish Coffee dripped down his white pants. "I'm still getting a definite refrigerator taste."

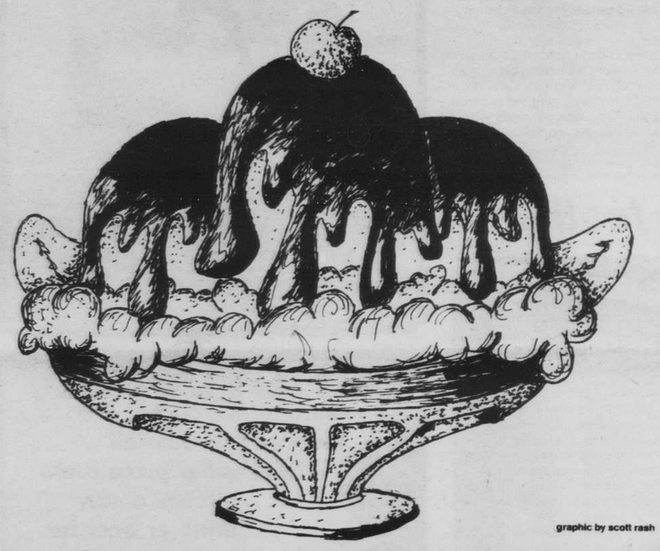
"You do?"

"Maybe it's just me."

"Refrigerator Mouth!" exclaimed the Quiet One.

And that is the story of how Refrigerator Mouth got his name.

Gantsy's
Cone: 55 cents.
Sundae: 95 cents plus 10 cents for hot fudge.
Ratings:
German Chocolate: 3.8
Irish Coffee: 3.6
Hot Fudge Sundae: 4.8
Average: 4.1



graphic by scott rash

The next stop was **Baskin-Robbins.** Our car's headlights illuminated other patrons' derrieres as they sat licking their cones in little student-type desks backed against the plate glass window. We entered the flourescent world and were greeted by a display case of ice cream cakes and ice cream cones with clown faces on them. Faded photos of typical '50's Oregon scenes lined the ceiling, and peach linoleum covered the floor.

We brought the selected cones (ours: Pralines & Cream; theirs: Chocolate Mousse Royale), and, of course, the sundae back to the car. The first observation was obvious. *"Minute* size of subbing. Soovings," attempted Banana Hater, his mouth full of Chocolate Mousse Royale.

"Subbings?" queried Conehead.

"Suvings. *Servings.* Tiny," agreed Refrigerator Mouth.

"Mmmm. The chocolate chips are very good. Bittersweet."

"The chocolate ice cream has a nice texture. Very heavy and dry. Sort of brownie-ish. Sort of."

"Nice environment in there. I mean, it's clean," said Conehead.

"Sterile," corrected Refrigerator Mouth.

"But aren't those cakes great to look at?" continued Conehead, undaunted. "I mean, they sort of smile at you as you come in."

These chips stick to your teeth, and then when they melt later, it's kind of nice."

"Time delay chips!"

The next item on the agenda was vanilla with butterscotch ribbons and little candy-coated almonds. Pralines & Cream.

"Make sure you get a praline," instructed Refrigerator Mouth, the main lobbyist for the flavor.

Crunch, crunch, crunch.

"Hmmm, about the texture," began Refrigerator Mouth. "Light, airy . . ."

"Watery, thin," added Banana Hater.

"Delicate," corrected Refrigerator Mouth, glaring slightly.

Crunch, crunch, crunch. Drip.

"Hey, Refrigerator Mouth has got multi-flavored pants!" said the Quiet One. Refrigerator rolled his eyes and searched for a napkin.

"Hmmm, about this sundae," said the Quiet One. "It doesn't look that good. It's too low in the cup, and the cherry looks kind of glossy . . . plastic-y."

"The cherry was painted on. Analyze the cherry, Mr. Spock."

Chew, chew chew. "Real!" pronounced Banana Hater.

"That is a Gooey sundae."

"Definitely."

"It has one texture — goo."

"There isn't much topping. It's already gone."

"It was pretty thin, too. Tastes like hot chocolate syrup. But the nuts are good. They're authentic."

"Now for the ratings. What did you think of the sundae?"

"Well," said Banana Hater, "it's not hard to be good when you're a sundae, but that wasn't. I'll give it a two and a half."

Baskin-Robbins
Cones: 55 cents.
Sundae: $1.45 plus 5 cents for French Vanilla.
Ratings:
Chocolate Mousse Royale: 5.9
Pralines & Cream: 5.3
Hot Fudge Sundae: 2.4
Average: 4.5

The new kid on the block is **Gelato Marco's** (Italian Ice Cream) at 25th and Willamette Streets. Marco's is a cross between Italy and the classical ice cream parlour we've all heard so much about. With a black and white checkerboard floor, wire-back ice cream parlour chairs and real wood tables, Marco's is a nice, comfortable sit-down ice cream restaurant. It's also very, very Italian, with fluted clear glass light fixtures, authentic Italian pop music, authentic Italian scoopers, and, best of all, authentic Italian ice cream.

Marco's variety is much softer than the other kinds judged, with a thicker, richer texture. Marco's flavors are definitely European with Crocantino (almond-rum-walnut), hazlenut, pistachio and lemon along with the more traditional flavors. Another difference is that Marco's serves its product in little Dixie cups rather than ice cream cones. Although the servings appear small at first sight, our judges soon found themselves well-satisfied, as the ice cream is denser than other types, and is more filling.

Since Marco's doesn't technically *do* hot fudge sundaes, we asked for whatever would closest approximate an Italian hot fudge sundae. Our friendly scooper thought for a moment, then whipped into action. Literally. He scooped our vanilla ice cream into a cup, then put the cup under a spout on a strange machine built into the wall, and *whoosh!* our sundae was topped with real fresh whipped cream. But that wasn't all. Since they didn't have any hot fudge handy, our friendly scooper mixed some bittersweet chocolate powder and some other ingredients, opened the expresso fountain and *whoosh!* Italian hot chocolate sauce. Top the whole thing with ground almonds and a cookie, and we had the first hot fudge sundae ever served at Marco's.

"Mmmmmmm," said Conehead between bites. "This makes me a believer in sundaes."

"Now *that's* a high-class sundae."

"The ice cream is so smooth, it almost disappears."

"It is disappearing. It's melting fast. Hmmm, kind of soupy toward the end."

"Mmmmmmmmmmmmmm."

Slurp, slurp, slurp.

"This crocantino is so thick . . ." started Refrigerator Mouth.

"And smooth," interjected the Quiet One.

"And heavy," finished Refridge.

"The rum is nicely not too overstated."

"The hazelnut in the chocolate hazelnut has kind of a burnt flavor . . . no, a toasted flavor. Give me some more of the crocantino."

Slurp, slurp, slurp. Drip. Chuckle, chuckle, chuckle.

"I can't believe it!" said Refrigerator Mouth as he looked for yet another napkin.

Gelato Marco's
Cup: 85 Cents (two flavors).
Sundae: $1 (one scoop).
(a normal sundae is $2 for two scoops).
Ratings:
Crocantino: 6.1
Chocolate Hazelnut: 6
Hot Chocolate Sundae: 7.3
Average: 6.5

Our final stop was at **Prince Puckler's.** Because we were getting tighter in the pocketbook and in the waistline, we had to handle **The Big Dipper** along with Prince Puckler's, since they both have the same ice cream.

It was a warm Tuesday evening, which means two things: (1) lots of people would be there for the Tuesday night sundae special (99 cents) and (2) lots of people would be there because it was warm. In spite of the line, we were waited on within five minutes.

While we waited, we ogled rows and rows of nummy-looking chocolates in the display case, and then the ice cream pies, clown cones and other et ceteras they create there. A steady diet of Grateful Dead and Rolling Stones was playing quietly on the stereo, as is typical.

Our selection was another Refrigerator Mouth special — Mandarin Chocolate. The friendly scooper said their most popular flavor was Bittersweet Nugget, so we shelled out an extra dime and tried it.

"Why do they call it Bittersweet Nugget?" asked Conehead.

"Because there are nuggets of bittersweet chocolate in the chocolate ice cream," explained Banana Hater in a Mr. Rogers voice. "Can you say nugget?"

"Oh," replied Conehead, repositioning herself in the seat. "Hey! Get your nose out of my ice cream!"

"Hey! Get your ice cream out of my nose!" replied Banana Hater.

"Both of the ice creams have a rich, full-bodied flavor and texture. This Mandarin Chocolate is like chocolate-covered orange candies. Mmmmm."

"Yecch," said Conehead. "I don't like it. It tastes like . . . old shoes."

The other judges let out cries of protest. "Well, I'm sorry, but I don't like it."

The other judges were starting to respond when they suddenly stopped. Refridge had managed to dip his nose into the ice cream. Another napkin.

"Mmmmm," he said when he had recollected himself. "Now that's a great bite of sundae. A very well-constructed sundae indeed." The other judges, their mouths full, nodded and "Mmmmm"-ed their agreement.

"It comes in a styrofoam bowl when you order it to go," said Banana Hater. "The sound of a plastic spoon scraping a styrofoam bowl really bothers me. That and the . . ."

"Banana!!" exclaimed Conehead, taking the word out of his mouth. "Mmmm. Good use of banana."

"Yecch!" exclaimed the Banana Hater. "A really good director wouldn't have needed to depend on a banana for a foundation for his sundae."

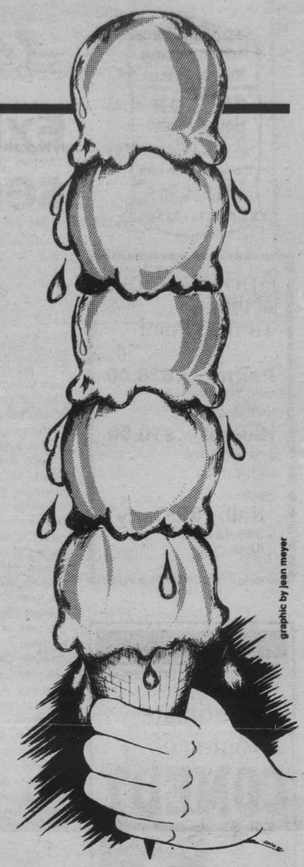
"Awww," retorted the Conehead, "you're just a banana hater!"

And that is the story of how Banana Hater got his name.

Prince Puckler's
Cone: 60 cents.
Sundae: $1.39, 99 cents Tuesdays until June.
Ratings:
Bittersweet Nugget: 7.4
Mandarin Chocolate: 5.4
Hot Fudge Sundae: 7.8
Average: 6.9

And with that, our judges climbed into the ice cream mobile, and rolled home, with visions of maraschino cherries dancing through their heads. The Ideal Ice Cream Cone? Well, that's hard to say. Everyone has their own preferences, and we only got to four ice creameries. With different likes, dislikes, and biases, our judges' clearest decision was that everyone would have to find their own Ideal Ice Cream. Happy hunting!

by matt (urp!) meyer



graphic by joan meyer

How they stacked up:

Prince Puckler's: 6.9

Gelato Marco's: 6.5

Baskin-Robbins: 4.5

Gantsy's: 4.1

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