

after freezing it overnight, I was thrilled to discover that I had made a batch that was indeed scoopable. This was a glorious creation. The flavor was amazing and the texture was near perfect.

I felt mighty. I felt capable. I was confident I could take on another batch of that custard-based beast. Fearing I might not yet have the strength to go it on my own, I called once again on my gurus Ben & Jerry for another recipe: fresh strawberry. Having just come into season and now beckoning me from the produce section — begging to be put into a frozen dessert — strawberry seemed exactly the right choice.

I went with the same methods of freezing the hell out of the drum, blending the daylight out of the mixture and praying like a zealot for success as I fired up the machine. And there was no doubt as I poured the mixture from the machine into the freezer container — it already looked (and tasted) like a work of art. This batch was perfection. I couldn't hand it out to enough willing taste-testers, including my nephews. For anyone familiar with 3- and 5-year-olds, their raving review came to me in the form of several minutes of joyous silence as they devoured their frozen treat. I had no shame in this batch. It did me proud.

By now I had eaten my weight (if not more) in ice cream. I began to forgo entire meals for a scoop or two. I'd fix a bowl, close my eyes and high-five my inner 8-year-old, who adored the idea of ice cream for dinner. One particularly awesome night, I went for some of that fantastic strawberry, then paused as I saw the remnants of the peanut butter in the next container. Inspiration struck. In moments I had invented what I like to call the PB&J or, for the uninitiated, a scoop of each. It was a stoner's wet dream.

I found myself scouring the internet and the bookshelves for any and all ice cream recipes. Lying in bed at night I'd dream up ideas for my next masterpiece. It was finally time to return to the source: chocolate. Chocolate malt, to be precise.

The recipe sounded impossibly delicious, a nod to the chocolate malteds I've always adored those old-time type soda fountains you find around these here United States. The recipe was pedestrian enough, and it didn't take long to have it mixed up, chilled and churning. When it was finished, I recognized the ideal consistency I'd come to

celebrate when digging ice cream out of the machine. But I confess, this was my first flavor failure. It was bland. Sure, it was scoopable, but I was going for nothing short of perfection. Frustration again bubbled to the top.

I admit it; I got swept up in the thrill and agony of attempting this new endeavor, scrambling like crazy to locate and create new batches every few days, taking each failure personally. I might even have lost a bit of my sanity. And then I realized that I would never be able to make all the recipes I set out to test before this article was due.

But here's the beauty of owning your own ice cream machine: You've got all the time in the world. I've started a file folder for all the flavors I'm dying to try, as well as a notebook full of my own sweet-tooth-fueled inventions. Every trip to the store leads me down at least five aisles I otherwise wouldn't visit, just so I can scout ingredients and swipe ideas from the masters come before me. I won't be quitting my day job any time soon, and I've reintroduced regular foods to my mealtimes, admitting — much to the chagrin of that inner 8-year-old — that one cannot subsist on ice cream alone.

At this point I've come to understand that this whole experiment is a process, and a long process at that. It is going to take a lot of time to find the right recipes yielding the greatest flavors. I'm overwhelmingly confident that the consistency and textures will be spot-on from this point forward. That was a hurdle I was able to leap from the get go. Now I must harness my mad scientist and get to concocting.

Armed with a killer five-dollar Goodwill find, I am now possessed of a desire to create culinary greatness, an army of friends and family who await the upcoming test batches, and my aforementioned love of ice cream still firmly in place.

For my final batch, as far as this article is concerned, I went for peach. An homage to my mother, my childhood and a request, of sorts, to Mother Nature to bring on the summer. ■



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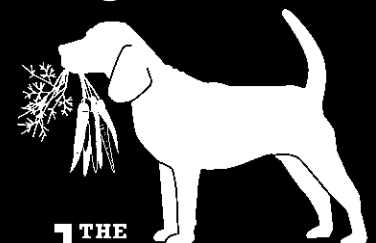
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