

So you think you know about ice cream

Haagen-Dazs' "premium" selections. Americans began to think of ice cream much as wine, cheese and cigars. No longer was it something to be bought in bulk at the grocery store; it was an epicurean adventure to be savored. Then, in the 1980s, Ben & Jerry's established ice cream as a social statement.

The move of ice cream beyond the supermarket freezer has created a fiercely competitive industry. "Ice cream retailing is one of those areas where people think they can come in on a shoestring and without much effort at marketing," says Donald Buckley, president of the National Ice Cream and Yogurt Retailers Association in Columbus, Ohio. "The truth is just the opposite."

Libowsky spends several hours a day marketing his product to restaurants and corporations.

At the ice cream retailers convention, he says, he learned "that the quickest way to bankruptcy was to just sit back and wait for the business to come in the front door."

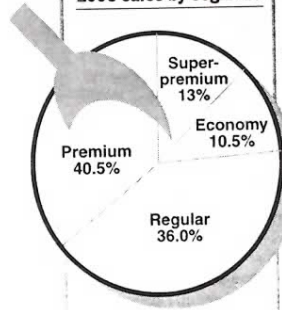
Henry Gentry, an independent retailer in Plano who advised Libowsky before he started his venture, agrees.

"You'll die in the winter if you don't get some sales to restaurants or parties," he says. "That's why it becomes important to be able to produce ice cream cakes and pies. We actually do as much business in December, at holiday party time, as we do in the heat of summer."

Buckley says Libowsky also is avoiding the biggest problem most retailers face — securing a high-quality product — by making his own.

"On-site manufacturing is the only way to

1993 sales by segment



1993 production by leading states
(Thousands of gallons)

State	Ice Cream	*Other	Total
California	109,453	46,862	156,315
Pennsylvania	71,048	27,364	98,412
Ohio	52,134	20,725	72,859
Texas	44,430	25,715	70,145
New York	40,856	18,243	59,099

*Includes ice milk, yogurt, frozen ices and sherbets.

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Almost 40 percent of U.S. households use toppings on frozen desserts. Hot fudge is the most popular.

absolutely guarantee that you'll get the quality product that you want," he said. "So many independent retailers suffer because their sources of supply are un dependable."

Quality is indeed important, says Gentry, something of a guru for area make-your-own retailers. He has operated his shop for eight years, since leaving Southland Corp. Like Libowsky, Gentry is something of a mad scientist ice cream mixer. He has experimented, by his own count, with more than 1,000 flavors.

"There are two things that make an independent ice cream store successful," Gentry says. "The first is premium quality. People are anxious to get something that they can't get in the supermarket."

The second, and most important thing, is a smile on the face of the proprietor, he says.

"This isn't the kind of business you can operate if you go around with a scowl on your face," Gentry says. "You have to understand that people come in and want not only to eat, but to be happy. This is a happy business."

And that's why Libowsky decided to follow his



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