

Lick (clockwise, from bottom), scoop, study, or share one of the more than 350 handcrafted flavors at Fort Worth's Milwaukee Joe's ice cream stores.



REGINALD LOFTIN

Paciugo ~ Dallas

The original Paciugo on Lovers Lane is decorated simply, with white walls and soda fountain tables. Most of the parlor's color is in the freezer, which is filled daily with a rainbow of gelato, an Italian style of ice cream that contains about one-third the fat of a typical domestic scoop, and fat-free water-based ices similar to sorbet. They're made daily at each of Paciugo's eight Dallas-area locations. Tasting is encouraged.

Daily flavors:

Thirty-two, selected on a rotating basis from more than 170 flavors. One coffee flavor—cappuccino and beignet, for instance—and some sort of vanilla are always available, as are chocolate chocolate chip, pistachio, tiramisu, black cherry swirl, and cin-

namon. More exotic flavors, including strawberry pepper and chocolate jalapeño, are usually bigger tasters than sellers. Fruit-based desserts such as red plum and fig are available on a seasonal basis.

Most popular: Chocolate chocolate chip gelato and wild berries sorbet.

The kids' report: Ginny, Alec, and their four-and-a-half-year-old friend Annie loved the strawberry. Ginny also approved of wild berries—"It tastes like strawberry, but it has chunks in it"—and green apple, but violet, a delicate essence of the flower, wrinkled her nose. Alec and Annie disagreed with Ginny's violet review. "I love that one," said Alec, who also heartily approved of "sweet, very creamy" black cherry swirl.

The big kids' report: Mary liked crème caramel, saying it tasted like the sugar on the bottom of flan, but she kept drifting back to Piedmontese crème, a vanilla styled to taste like wedding cake. I went for the pumpkin pie. It tastes like real pumpkin pie, my favorite part of Thanksgiving dinner. —S.D.

Milwaukee Joe's ~ Fort Worth

Maybe it's just a hunch, but we're pretty sure we know why Milwaukee Joe's Gourmet Ice Cream stores in the Fort Worth suburbs of Southlake and Bedford—the ones decorated with cartoonish black-and-white cows—are packed to the rafters during the summer months. Could it be because co-owner Joe Libowsky's recipes call for 14 percent butterfat compared to the 10 percent of typical ice creams? "The butterfat is one reason, but we also shop around the world to find the ingredients we like," says Libowsky, who traded in a career as a federal agent to become the Fort Worth area's favorite ice cream man. "When you make ice cream by hand, you can do anything you want. When we make pecan pie ice cream, for instance, we cut up real pecan pies and stir in the pieces."

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