

The Ottawa Citizen

100 Miles Good Lickin'

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Photo: Molly McNulty, The Ottawa Citizen / Pascale Berthiaume, right, serves Mary O'Connor her all-natural home-made ice cream from a cart outside the Wellington Gastropub.

What's New?

Pascale's All-Natural Ice Cream.

Is this really new? I seem to remember seeing it on a menu somewhere ...

You're right. Pascale Berthiaume, the pastry chef at Wellington Gastropub, has been making ice creams for the dessert menu for about a year and a half. But this weekend she's going to start offering them in half-litre containers that customers can buy to take home. And she hopes soon to start selling little cups of her homemade ice creams from a refrigerated cart on the patio in front of the restaurant, at 1325 Wellington St. West.

Will They Sell?

It seems so. During A Taste of Wellington West on June 7, she had a trial run and her ice creams -- all 20 litres of the raspberry passion fruit and banana caramel that she had prepared -- were licked up in less than two hours. Mind you, it was free ice cream on the hottest weekend of the year.

So are Her Ice Creams Popular Otherwise?

Incredibly. When Pascale first joined the Gastropub staff and started experimenting with making ice cream, it was simply written on the menu as "in-house ice cream." After a while, though, people started noticing how good it was, and asking who made it. The owners started calling the desserts "Pascale's homemade ice creams." "That's when it all exploded," says the 28-year-old. "I went from making about four litres a week to making 16 litres twice a week."

What Flavour are Pascale's Ice Creams?

What aren't they? Pascale always has three flavours on the menu and changes them weekly. Some of the most popular flavours have been raspberry-cassis ("It's really fresh and tart," says Pascale), dulce de leche (for more than three hours, she reduces milk, sugar and baking soda into rich, brown caramel), peanut butter and salted caramel, banana chai and white chocolate espresso with pecans.

What's Next?

"Today I was thinking about making a roasted almond and amaretto semifreddo," Pascale said last week (semifreddo is a half-frozen kind of Italian ice

cream that you don't churn.) "Chris (Gastropub chef Chris Deraiche) loves corn, so I want to try making a caramel corn ice cream."

Anything Weirder?

Challenged by Steve Beauchesne of Beau's All-Natural Brewing Company, Pascale made a milk-chocolate-bogwater-with-oat meal-praline ice cream last winter, when Beau's Bogwater ale was on tap at the Gastropub.

How Local?

When you buy Pascale's ice cream, you're getting it mere feet from where it was made. (And down 16 steps, once she starts operating her cart on the patio.) The ingredients vary from very local to not-so local. "I try to be local as much as I can," she says. She usually starts with a custard base made from 35-per-cent cream, egg yolks, sugar and vanilla bean seeds. These all come from Ontario and Quebec companies such as Beatrice, which is part of Parmalat, based in Toronto, so some of the cream could have come from local dairies and some of the yolks from local farms. Ingredients such as sugar, vanilla pods and chocolate obviously come from farther away. Pascale also loves to use local fruits from the Parkdale Market, just down the street from the restaurant. "In winter, of course, I have to substitute. And I want to try to make kiwi ice cream."

Did Pascale Always See Ice Cream in Her Future?

Hardly. Her family has run a funeral home in Hawkesbury for the past 100 years and at one time she thought she'd join that business. She also considered being a paramedic or an RCMP officer, and did a degree in psychology and criminology at the University of Ottawa. She worked on Parliament Hill as an assistant to former MP Don Boudria before deciding to attend the Cordon Bleu culinary school in Ottawa. But even there, she did all three levels of cooking courses required to be a chef, but ran out of money before taking the pastry chef courses.

So How Did She End Up Making Desserts?

She landed her first cooking job at Beckta, where they taught her the pastry chef ropes. "I love the fact that you have to measure everything and that everything has to be so precise," she says. She then went on to work at Nicastro's before moving to the Gastropub. "I love working here. The owners (Deraiche and Shane Waldron) are really, really cool

people."

And Now?

"It's kind of insane," she says with a look of wonder. "I've got 1,000 stickers ready for the cartons. I plan to sell seven to eight flavours of ice cream in half-litre cartons, for \$8.50 each, and two to four on the patio. I'll keep some flavours exclusive to the restaurant. I need to buy a shed to operate from on the patio. I'm shooting for July 1, but it all depends on getting permits from the city. I hope to sell on the patio in the afternoons and maybe later on Saturday night. I have a lot of musician friends so maybe I'll get some of them to play. I can't believe all this is happening."

100 Miles features food and goods grown or made within 100 miles of Ottawa. Send ideas or questions to life@thecitizen.canwest.com