

QUEST

Homemade Ice Cream

BY SHAWNA WAGMAN



Power of three: Wellington Gastropub's banana brownie, vanilla caramel latte, and white chocolate pistachio

Ice cream's ability to inspire a youthful sense of play extends to the people making it as much as to the people eating it. For chefs who make their own ice cream, it can be a consuming passion. They wax poetic about the art and science of creating new flavours and the elusive pursuit of balance: creamy-smooth texture, sweet but not over-the-top sweet, and the subtle versus potent flavours that ultimately reach our frozen little taste buds. But what they're really saying is that they play with it until it's right. Spoon in hand, I raided the freezers of four restaurant kitchens to taste-test some of the best scoops around.

The Place	The Goods	The Flavours (Note: flavours change often)	The Verdict
<p>The Wellington Gastropub 1325 Wellington St. W. 613-729-1315</p> <p>Pastry chef: Pascale Berthiaume</p>	<p>This is French custard taken to its richest, creamiest, sweetest extreme; we're talking 100-plus egg yolks, a kilo of sugar, and cream and nothing but cream.</p>	<p>Faves: Raspberry-cassis, dulce de leche, PB&J, white chocolate pistachio, banana fudge, and Bailey's milk chocolate buttercrunch semifreddo Most exotic: Milk chocolate Bogwater (a strong, dark beer by Beau's) with home-made oatmeal pralines</p>	<p>It's like eating a frozen truffle with a spoon. Berthiaume has a passionate fan base for her wickedly decadent ice creams. Customers have been known to ask if they can thank her in person or send her drinks to express their gratitude. Taster's choice: Caramel latte Price: Three scoops for \$7</p>
<p>Ambiente 18 Beechwood Ave. 613-744-6509</p> <p>Chef/owner: Michael Guy</p>	<p>Old-school French crème anglaise base and a simple device known as a sugar density metre that ensures optimum texture.</p>	<p>Faves: Banana (served with signature molten chocolate cake), coconut, passion fruit, dulce de leche Most exotic: Pear with star anise, olive oil, fennel (served with apple and thyme tart)</p>	<p>Dreamy, creamy, silky ice cream in pure flavours that are reminiscent of the best gelato in Italy. Taster's choice: Blood orange sorbet so creamy, it's hard to believe there is no cream in it. Price: Three scoops for \$6</p>
<p>Juniper 245 Richmond Rd. 613-728-0220</p> <p>Pastry chef: Trevor Smith</p>	<p>Alcohol, honey, corn syrup, and caramel are all ingredients that keep ice cream from freezing too hard; fresh berries are used in the summer sorbets.</p>	<p>Faves: Raspberry with cream cheese, pear crisp, passion fruit, bourbon caramel with brown butter, fresh mint and chocolate ganache, blueberry and black tea Most exotic: Rosemary ice cream, cucumber sorbet tossed into a gin and tonic</p>	<p>Customers should be carded before consuming the potent booze-based flavours. "I like heavy, dense ice cream you almost have to chew," explains Smith. Taster's choice: Espresso Price: Two scoops for \$8</p>
<p>The Urban Pear 151 Second Ave. 613-569-9305</p> <p>Sous chef: Mark Currier</p>	<p>Ice cream is used as a garnish to complement the flavours in other desserts; equal parts cream and milk in the custard base, infused with seasonal ingredients.</p>	<p>Faves: Maple, sour cream, honey and cheddar (using three-year-old Balderson cheddar) to garnish a fruit crumble, spring pea ice cream to garnish cheesecake Most exotic: Blue cheese ice cream served with a red-wine-poached pear</p>	<p>The least rich and creamy of the bunch. Taster's choice: Spring pea. It has a gorgeous pale green colour and subtle sweetness infused with the added flavour of nostalgia: Green Giant peas. Price: Included with other desserts</p>