

Mick Spillane
Gannett News
646-734-5547

"Abbott's in Winter"

By Mick Spillane

My personal rule is not to eat ice cream after Sept. 22. It's one of my quirks. Why is that though?

Perhaps it's too surreal to see people eating ice cream in the midst of a lake-effect snowstorm. Yet Russians eat ice cream all winter long. I remember seeing a *National Geographic* photo of a little girl, wrapped in a babushka, devouring ice cream.

I think this was prior to *glasnost*, so in midst of social problems, ice cream in the winter is probably a good thing. But Rochesterians, too, are a vigorous breed; we want ice cream in the winter. So, when people in Rochester want ice cream or custard they head to Abbott's Frozen Custard.

Abbott's locations

It's a Saturday night, a week before Christmas — the holidays are here. What's better after a long day of shopping in the cold than a hot toddy, or some hot chocolate from one of the many corporate, "massifications of culture" coffee bars, that dot the greater Rochester landscape? Sure, many of us want warm beverages, sipping them by an open hearth, but there are also those die-hard Abbott's frozen custard fans.

I visited the Pittsford store to find people who need frozen treats in winter. Brittany Aloï, 18, of Pittsford, who was home from Furman University in South Carolina on Christmas break with her boyfriend, a native of Louisiana, was there.

When asked what brought her to Abbott's on this Saturday in December she answered: "To show my boyfriend my favorite ice cream parlor" and indulge in her favorite winter custard, "butter pecan yogurt." The regulars came in for a taste of summer, like Joanna Davis, 28, of Rochester, who on this Saturday night said, "Frozen custard is good no matter what the weather...It's happy food," as she consumed a peanut butter custard sundae.

Warm toppings for winter

I attempted to order my favorite summer ice cream experience, the blueberry milkshake; alas, it is not a staple of the winter menu.

Don Wolak, Marketing Director of Abbott's Frozen Custard, says, "The winter menu revolves around such regional favorites as pumpkin ice cream, pumpkin shakes -- tastes like a pumpkin pie. It's a fan favorite that we release on a limited basis from October till spring."

The winter delights, according to Wolak, that Rochesterians can't get enough of are the warm sundaes: Mudd slide, Chunky Mudd, Apple Pie, I Want S'more, Butter Pecan, Mint Chocolate Chip, and of course, Hot Fudge.

Wolak explained that business at Abbott's in the winter months revolves around the take-home business. Such hot-selling winter treats are the local favorites: the famous "Turtle," Chip Wheels, Abbott's Cannollis (a cannoli shell filled with custard, rolled in dark chocolate, and nuts) from the novelties and cakes section of the menu.

Why do Rochesterians seek out Abbott's Frozen Custard in the winter? Scott Bagley, 43, owner of the Pittsford Abotts says, "Our custard makes people feel good, no

matter what the temperature.” Bagley went on to say, “I enjoy providing this service for my many regulars throughout the winter months.”

Maybe it is all the seasonal flavors that get people eating ice cream in the winter, or maybe there is something comforting in having ice cream in the winter. It could just be that Rochesterians are making a statement: That they laugh in the face of winter by indulging in Abbott’s Frozen Custard.

(Sidebar)

Abbott’s in winter

The Abbott’s in Pittsford -- at 624 Pittsford-Victor Road -- is open year round. It is open 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday through Wednesday and Thursdays through Saturdays 11 a.m. and 9:30 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. For more information call 385-1366.

You can find six Abbott’s counters inside Bill Gray’s restaurants and others in area mall food courts.

There are 17 other Abbott’s locations in Monroe County with most stand-alone stores closing down for the winter at the owner’s discretion. (They tend to close around Thanksgiving, depending on the weather, and reopen in February.)

For a complete store directory, go to:
www.abbottscustard.com/storedirectory.htm

Copyright © 2012 Mick Spillane
All Rights Reserved