

A Game of Cones

-Danny Plunkett

The flowers have bloomed, leaves have appeared on the trees, and here in Marblehead we have had a few real tastes of summer weather. The whimsical bursts of sunshine and the few surprisingly hot days have directed everyone's minds (and taste buds) to their favorite summer food: ice cream. Now, since other frozen treats have gained popularity recently, I use the term "ice cream" loosely to encompass frozen yogurt, soft serve, gelato, classic hard-pack....etc.

Ice cream has always been immensely popular in New England, but to me it seems to have become something of a phenomenon of late. As such, the residents of Marblehead were stricken at the loss of Terry's, the best trafficked and most accessible ice cream establishment in town. Terry's and the neighboring Five Corners Kitchen were both closed down by the same fire last year, prompting ice cream enthusiasts such as myself to scramble for other options. The other prominent shop in town, Coffey Ice Cream, is regrettably only seasonal and not a viable option once the weather started to turn for the worse.

Kids and adults alike had to find other places that could satisfy their desire for cold, sweet, delicious oblivion, and looked to other towns for the answer. Salem has always offered a magnificent selection of ice cream choices, so despite the traffic and increased distance, Marbleheaders flocked eagerly to shops in the abutting town. I was one of these migratory desserters, spending an obscene amount of time in Salem this past fall, winter, and now spring. Kushco Bistro has been a solid replacement for me and my friends with its frozen yogurt, but others have gone elsewhere to Ben & Jerry's, Treadwell's, and even Rita's in search of iced happiness.

Now, not only is the season changing, the dessert scene is changing as well. Drastically. Let the games begin.

Here is the situation. Terry's is making its long awaited return to Marblehead on May 1st, the beginning of the ice cream season. Now that's definitely a positive, but while Terry's will be moving into a different building, it will also be coming in to a different market. In only the last year, frozen yogurt, or "fro-yo," has become ridiculously popular and several chains have sprung up seemingly out of nowhere. Orange Leaf is one of these new fro-yo sensations. It offers self serve desserts, and is placing two branches in dramatic locations in Marblehead and Salem. The first Orange Leaf, "opening spoon" according to the signs, will be only a few paces down Atlantic Avenue from Terry's new location and will offer significant competition in light of the fro-yo craze. Interestingly, another Orange Leaf will be "opening spoon" (it's still funny, trust

me) directly across from the firehouse in Salem, right in the center of a slew of already well-established ice cream shops.

A question rises from this icy chaos. Will the old loyalties prevail? Many a Marbleheader went to Terry's on an almost religious basis, but a significant portion of the teenage population has created new ties in the fro-yo sector, myself included. People may come back from Salem for the local treats, but perhaps not. Will the old-towners go back to their nearby Coffey Ice Cream or continue to roam farther from home? The next few months will be very, very interesting for any ice cream aficionado as these businesses settle in for a long summer.

Are you ignoring these flavorful affairs of the spoon, this "game of cones?" Well maybe it's time you started paying attention, because it's your taste buds on the line just as much as mine.

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