

TEST KITCHEN

Churning Out Ice Cream Till the Sundae After Next

By DENISE LANDIS



Making ice cream at home has gotten easier, thanks to the fact that new machines have built-in compressors. The home machines that most people bought in the past 20 years had a downsides. No, it wasn't eating too much homemade

caramel fudge ripple: the machines required the freezing — usually overnight — of a large, insulated coolant-lined bowl that was then placed in the machine, taking the place of the crushed ice and salt that chilled the ingredients in older machines. Fanatics like me kept a couple of the inserts in the freezer all year long, taking up precious space.

By the time the ice cream was made, churned by hand or by a motorized crank, the liquid coolant in the insert had warmed and required more freezing. That ended ice-cream making for the day.

With a compressor no insert is needed: it keeps the inner walls cold enough to turn the custard and your favorite flavorings into ice cream. You can make batches continually, experimenting with one combination of flavors after another — first a batch of plain chocolate, then chocolate with crushed malted balls, then frozen yogurt or a fruity sorbet.

Compressor machines have been used commercially for years, but they were inappropriate for home use, because they were too big, heavy, expensive and ugly. But the new generation of makers fit on kitchen counters, and most make somewhat larger quantities of ice cream than older machines

— hard, high-quality ice cream that is finished in only 40 minutes or so.

All can be used to make semifrozen beverages as well. Shakes, slushies and margaritas do not require the addition of crushed ice as in a blender, allowing for pure, strong flavors.

Some new machines cost upward of \$1,000; I tested six models selling for \$150 to \$250. Most make one and a half quarts or more, though larger models are available.

I tried out Cuisinart's Supreme Commercial Quality Ice Cream Maker, the Deni Compressor Ice Cream Maker, the one-quart Gelato by Lello, the Nemox Gelato Chef 2200, Salton's Big Chill Ice Cream Maker and Whynter's Sno Ice Cream Maker. I used the same recipes in every machine.

There's no getting around one thing: these machines are heavy, 22 to 33 pounds. The weight would be more manageable with handles, but only the Cuisinart has them.

And the noise! If your neighbors complain about your television, you might not want to whip up a late-night snack in one of these things. While some make less noise than others, none are quiet.

All the machines made good ice cream, but some made the task more enjoyable than others. My two favorites were the Salton and the Deni. They won out because they have convenient timers and freezing systems that operate separately from the churning mechanism.

The second feature is important because ice cream goes through several stages. First it is chilled and begins to thicken. Then it is aerated, increasing its volume. The volume of custard may initially look skimpy, but it will fill the bowl by the time it is finished.

Finally, when the ice cream is so thick it can no longer be churned, it may be hardened further by letting it continue to freeze. A freezing system that operates separately from the churning motor or paddle allows the ice cream to remain in the machine after the churning has finished. That way fans

of both hard and soft ice cream can be happy: for harder, just leave the ice cream in the machine after it's finished churning.

I particularly liked the Salton's large aperture for pouring in the custard and dropping in ingredients like nuts or chocolate chips, because there's less mess. The timer shows how much longer it will be until the ice cream is done, a nice feature for a busy cook. But it has only two settings: 40 minutes, or 50. If a shorter chilling time is desired — for drinks, say — the machine must be turned off manually.

The Deni, in a white plastic case with clean rounded edges, was attractive for its price. Both it and the Salton have lights that show the setting time and a buzzer that sounds at the end. But it has only three settings: 10, 30 and 50 minutes.

My next favorite was the Cuisinart, which has a no-nonsense look. The timer can

be set from 1 to 60 minutes, making it easy to whip up drinks. The lid has an opening for adding ingredients while the machine is in use. But it was the noisiest one I tested: I found it impossible to have a conversation over its din.

The Nemox has a few peculiarities that I came to overlook because I liked its compactness. As with the others, the bowl can be removed for easy cleaning, but while the ice cream is being made, the bowl has to sit in a bit of alcohol or salted water, which then must be wiped out.

I found the machines by Whynter and Lello (available at whynter.com and iccreamprofessional.com, respectively) the bulkiest and hardest to clean because their lids were screwed to the motors and could not be detached easily for washing. I was looking for convenience, so although both worked quite well, they failed in the easy-to-use category.

CHERRY SPUMONI

Time: 20 minutes, plus freezing

- ¾ cup milk
- ¾ cup sugar
- 1½ teaspoon salt
- ¾ cup half and half
- 1½ cups heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon almond extract
- 3 tablespoons tart cherry concentrate (see note)
- ½ cup (packed) frozen, pitted tart (sour) or sweet cherries, defrosted, or pitted tart or sweet canned cherries (do not use fresh fruit)
- ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons slivered or sliced blanched almonds
- ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons chopped semi-sweet chocolate or chocolate chips.

1. Place milk in a small heavy-bottom saucepan over medium heat until bubbles just begin to form around edge of pan. Remove from heat, and add sugar and salt. Stir until dissolved.

2. Add half and half, heavy cream, vanilla extract, almond extract and cherry concentrate. Mix well. Transfer to a bowl, and set in an ice water bath until cool, about 10 minutes.

3. Coarsely chop cherries, and press between paper towels to remove excess liquid. Add to chilled milk mixture. Begin freezing in an ice cream maker according to manufacturer's instructions. When ice cream has begun to thicken, after about 10 minutes, add almonds and chopped chocolate. Continue freezing until ice cream is very thick.

Yield: 1½ quarts.

Note: Tart cherry concentrate is available from tartissmart.com, (509) 488-1049; \$10 plus shipping for 1 pint.

Roll Your Own

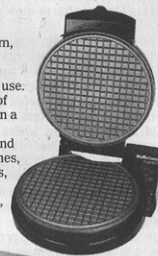
ONCE you go to the trouble of making your own ice cream, why serve it in flavorless store-bought cones?

Chef'sChoice WaffleCone Express lets you make your own cones. The waffle iron is lightweight and easy and fast to use. Plug it in, give it a few moments to heat, and pour a spoonful of batter on the griddle. Close the lid, and a thin waffle is ready in a minute.

Now for the fun: shaping the waffle around a plastic cone and letting it cool. Chef'sChoice offers a mix for making sugar cones, but the iron comes with a booklet with recipes for wafer cones, buttery cones and chocolate cones. Tint the batter with food coloring, dip the edges of the cones in dark or white chocolate, and dredge in nonpareils or chocolate jimmies. Then try to persuade everyone you did it for the children.

DENISE LANDIS

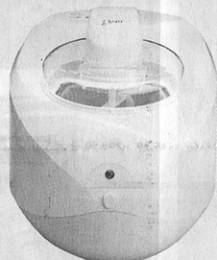
Chef'sChoice WaffleCone Express: \$44.98 at Zabar's; \$49.95 at the Art of Cooking; \$49.99 at Chef Central, Paramus, N.J.



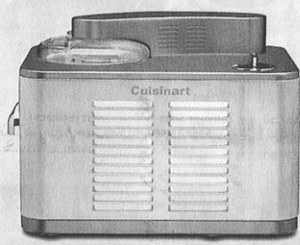
For the Endless Summer, an Endless Chill



SALTON BIG CHILL ICE CREAM MAKER
DIMENSIONS 11 by 15 by 11 inches high
WEIGHT 25 pounds
CAPACITY 1.5 quarts
PROS Lively color. Buzzer sounds 30 seconds before ice cream is done. Ice cream can be further chilled after churning.
CONS No handles. Only two timer settings.
PRICE \$199.99 at eSalton.com and at Amazon.com



DENI COMPRESSOR ICE CREAM MAKER
DIMENSIONS 10 by 16 by 12 inches high
WEIGHT 25 pounds
CAPACITY 1.5 quarts
PROS Attractive design. Buzzer sounds when ice cream is almost ready.
CONS No handles. Only three timer settings.
PRICE \$145.99 at costco.com, \$174.99 at target.com, \$179.99 at sears.com, \$199.99 at deni.com



CUISINART SUPREME COMMERCIAL QUALITY ICE CREAM MAKER
DIMENSIONS 10 by 16 by 11 inches high
WEIGHT 31 pounds
CAPACITY 1.5 quarts
PROS Has handles. Simple to operate. Bell sounds when timer runs out.
CONS Painfully noisy. Very heavy.
PRICE \$249.98 at Zabar's; \$249.95 from Sur la Table, surlatable.com, (800) 243-0852



NEMOX GELATO CHEF 2200
DIMENSIONS 10 by 14 by 12 inches high
WEIGHT 24 pounds
CAPACITY 1.5 liters
PROS Compact and relatively easy to carry.
CONS No timer and no signal when done. Instructions and recipes use some metric measurements.
PRICE \$239.98 at Zabar's.