

## SOUP

## Tomato Soup Goes Extra Bold

Roasted tomatoes and roasted tomatillo salsa add deep, concentrated flavor to a classic dish.

See B3



## DRINKS

## Beat the Heat From the Inside Out

Antioxidant-packed green tea, blueberries, and lemon juice fight summer inflammation to truly cool and refresh.

See B5

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THURSDAY, AUG. 11, 2022 B1

# FOOD

THE EPOCH TIMES

## Local Scoops

Across the country, artisan ice cream makers spin regional, seasonal ingredients into sweet creations with a strong sense of place



Ice cream is broadly nostalgic and evocative—especially when made with ingredients iconic to a certain place.



**The kaleidoscopic palate of local and regional ingredients invokes both regional identity and the sorts of subliminal affections we all store in our psyches like personal talismans.**

ERIC LUCAS

**T**iny but mighty: New Mexico piñon nuts are intensely packed with flavor.

My sister, Kristin, and I grin with appreciation as we sample the piñon ice cream at Katrina's, a bright, compact little sweets bistro in downtown Albuquerque. The confection not only genuinely tastes like the pine nuts—a subtly sweet butteriness—but it also carries hints of the pithy, redolent aroma of this iconic Southwest food. Its essence is evocative for us both, as our adult lives started in New Mexico long ago.

Ice cream is broadly nostalgic; this millennia-old culinary treat's modern form brings to mind warm summer days along elm-lined streets. It goes with softball, convertibles, drive-ins, and root beer.

It also serves well—perhaps better than any other popular food—as a vehicle for local and regional flavors that are both tasty and meaningful, such as piñon in Albuquerque.

My childhood family trips to Mexico are recalled instantly by coconut ice cream. Residents of Idaho and Montana relish the taste and the ethos of wild huckleberries—in ice cream, pies, and more. The same goes for people in Maine, where the wild Maine blueberry is such a part of life that once, when I asked a waitress if a café's dessert used Maine blueberries, she stared at me like I'd asked if she knew who her mother was.

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## The Broth of Summer

Naengmyeon, a Korean cold noodle soup, is a bowl of savory, tangy, spicy refreshment

ARI LEVAUX

Naengmyeon (n-yang-me-on) translates to “cold noodles” in Korean. This simple name renders incomplete justice to this kaleidoscopic dish.

The noodles are indeed cold, thanks to pieces of ice floating amongst them in the pre-chilled daikon radish broth. Atop the

**What I got was a spicy and sour juggernaut that stopped my sweat in its tracks.**

noodles are a colorful combination of proteins and plant parts, including meat, egg, blanched vegetables, pickled radish, hot peppers, and cucumbers, renowned for their coolness. Who knows what else is in that bowl? There is only one way to find out: Dig and slurp your way to the bottom of this treasure hunt of a meal.

I first enjoyed naengmyeon on an August afternoon in a Vancouver, BC restaurant, after being lured inside by a sign advertising a summer menu. I was expecting seasonal vegetables. What I got was a spicy and sour juggernaut that stopped my sweat in its tracks.

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Sliced brisket, hard-boiled eggs, cucumber, and Asian pear are common toppings, but there's no limit to the number of variations naengmyeon can accommodate.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF WILD SCOOPS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

# Local Scoops

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*Continued from B1*

In Wisconsin, it's cranberries. In Alaska, it's wild blueberries—different from those in Maine. Georgia, peaches. North Carolina, sorghum, the marvelous sweetener that also makes the best molasses. In Hawaii, macadamia nuts. In Oregon, marionberries (named after the state's Marion County). All these and many more are regionally significant ingredients that highlight the production menus and foodways philosophies at artisan ice cream makers.

## Enchanting Scoops

Piñon, for instance, permeates life in New Mexico, almost as much as chiles. The piñon pine tree's hard, dense wood has warmed humans and cooked their food in the Land of Enchantment for thousands of years; to this day, the sharp, spicy scent of piñon smoke is instantly evocative of fall and winter in New Mexico. The sap has long been used in healing ointments and salves. And the nuts, though small and labor-intensive to gather and shell, provide highly nutritious and savory sustenance.

At Katrina's, piñon ice cream is simplicity itself. Marelú Coronado, the maker, simply adds coarse-ground nuts to a basic ice cream recipe, plus a dash of pink coloring designed to intrigue wary customers used to the vanilla-chocolate-butter pecan ice cream oligarchy.

"Adding ground nuts gives the ice cream some texture," Coronado explained, "and without the pink, it would be just plain white, so the color entices people to try it."

The piñon ice cream at Katrina's is far more than just a sweet treat; it represents the land in which it arises. Piñon provenance is so significant here that state law regulates their labeling: Pine nuts from Nevada and Europe, though similar and related botanically, may not be called piñons in New Mexico.

## Wild Flavors

This loyalty to local life is reflected in the extensive menu of Alaskan flavors that artisan maker Elissa Brown prepares at Wild Scoops in Anchorage. Foraged blueberries, cranberries, and huckleberries are mainstays.

But the nature of food production in the Northland leads to some items most customers would consider truly odd in, say, Oklahoma.

For instance, beets are best for more than borscht. But ice cream? Really?

"Oh, I just love the rich color, the inherent sweetness, the deep flavor," Brown said. "There are a lot of things we can't grow up here, but beets are fantastic, so I can't wait till they start showing up in the farmers markets every summer."

Beet is just one of many Alaskan flavors at Wild Scoops. Carrot shows up, as do birch syrup (lightly sweet, like hay), spruce tips

("a powerful, aromatic, lemony flavoring, like a walk in the forest," Brown said), and rhubarb, a tart Alaskan icon that is often the only cultivated plant in backyard gardens in the Great Land.

"That's like a juicy pink sherbet; people look forward to it every year," Brown said.

Not only do they look forward to the ice cream, but they also relish the sourcing. Brown encourages Anchorage residents to bring in their spare rhubarb, in return for coupons for use later. In other words, it's crowd-sourced ice cream. This summer, the yield was 3,000 pounds.

"We worked feverishly to process it all," Brown said.

"There's an incredibly strong local foods movement in Alaska. It's part of the nature of life here," Brown said of her commitment to this panoply of local ingredients.

## Nature's Sweetness

Novelty ice cream flavors can get out of hand. In Alaska, you may also sample smoked salmon ice cream; in the Midwest, bacon; in the Southwest, jalapeño; and California, garlic.

Why anyone would make these is puzzling in a world chock full of more suitable ingredients—fruits, berries, and other foods that hold inherent sweetness. Nature creates dozens of sugars by her own devices; humans need only take thoughtful advantage.

Consider sweet corn, the mainstay of the "three sisters" that fed indigenous peoples in the Western Hemisphere for millennia. American grocery store shelves hold thousands of processed foods based on high-fructose corn syrup, an industrial derivative of a natural sugar.

But corn syrup in its modern form is about as flavorful as white sugar. Sweet corn has gustatory depth that not only pleases the palate, but evokes the same summertime ethos that ice cream does generally.

"Sweet corn ice cream is quite popular in Asia," said Helen Yung, co-owner of Sweet Republic in Phoenix. "It's a perfect ingredient—golden yellow, already sweet, the highlight of summer."

Yung and her partner go to great lengths to heighten the interest in their sweet corn ice cream. They cook fresh corn kernels in butter, and steep the cobs in boiling water, blending both results into their house-made ice cream base. Then, although corn disappears from local farmers markets at the end of June, into the freezer it goes.

"That's the beauty of ice cream; it can store forever even if an ingredient is seasonal," Yung said.

She believes the universal popularity of ice cream derives from the fact that almost all human beings grow up on milk, thus implanting an intrinsic affinity for it.

"I've never met anyone who doesn't like ice cream," she said.



Wild Scoops's rhubarb crumble ice cream is crowd-sourced: Locals bring their backyard harvest to trade for ice cream vouchers.

“That’s the beauty of ice cream; it can store forever even if an ingredient is seasonal.”

Helen Yung, co-founder and ice cream chef, Sweet Republic

I suspect the flavors are equally crucial. The basics are universally beloved—vanilla and chocolate—and the kaleidoscopic palate of local and regional ingredients invokes both regional identity, as in Alaska, Idaho, and Maine, and the sorts of subliminal affections we all store in our psyches like personal talismans.

If some of my fondest memories are triggered by piñon or coconut, what could be better than indulging these atavistic impulses with an ice cream cone?

Eric Lucas is a retired associate editor at *Alaska Beyond Magazine* and lives on a small farm on a remote island north of Seattle, where he grows organic hay, beans, apples, and squash.

ERIC LUCAS



The piñon ice cream at Katrina Ice Cream Shop in Albuquerque, N.M., is made with coarse-ground New Mexico pine nuts and a dash of food coloring.



Wild blueberry ice cream at Wild Scoops in Anchorage, Alaska.



Sweet corn ice cream at Sweet Republic in Phoenix, Ariz.

## Don't Let Summer Pass Without Making Stewed Tomatoes

PATTY CATALANO

In the summer when the markets are overflowing with fresh tomatoes, I pick the plumpiest beefsteak varieties. I slice and stack them in a BLT, layer them with fresh mozzarella to compose a classic caprese salad, or blend them into a fresh salsa for snacking. I also always reserve a few for stewed tomatoes—and you should, too.

Homemade stewed tomatoes are slow-cooked until tender, soft, and silky. They're infused with fresh basil and sweetened ever-so-slightly to bring out their flavor. As a result, these tomatoes are slightly sweeter with a more dynamic flavor than the classic canned variety. Bell pepper is an optional ingredient here and

**These tomatoes are slightly sweeter with a more dynamic flavor than the classic canned variety.**

can be added for flavor and texture.

### Diced Versus Stewed Tomatoes

Diced tomatoes are canned tomatoes that have been diced via a machine and canned in tomato juice or purée. Calcium chloride or citric acid are often added to canned diced tomatoes to help the tomatoes maintain their shape, and as a result it may take longer for this style of canned tomato to soften or break down.

Stewed tomatoes are whole tomatoes that are slow-cooked in a Dutch oven, and seasoned with salt, sugar, and fresh basil. Bell pepper may also be included.

### How to Use

Although stewed tomatoes are delicious as is, it's a very versatile ingredi-

ent, too. Use stewed tomatoes in practically any recipe that calls for a can of whole, crushed, or diced tomatoes: as a base for shakshuka, in minestrone soup, as a poaching liquid for fish, in chili, or in tikka masala.

### How to Preserve

Canning tomatoes requires extra equipment (a pressure canner for lower-acid tomatoes or a traditional water bath setup if the acid levels are higher). That's why I freeze stewed tomatoes during the peak picking season instead.

Once the tomatoes have simmered and stewed, transfer them to a bowl set inside an ice bath. Stir occasionally until the stewed tomatoes are completely cool.

Transfer the tomatoes to freezer-safe