

# Sundae Best's ice cream business keeps cows working

BY SALLY BAIR  
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LITITZ — There is probably no more delightful way to get your daily supply of milk requirements than through ice cream, and Alan and Nancy Sechrist are eager to help local residents through the summer with their own delicious product.

Open less than one year, the Sechrists' Sundae Best ice cream parlor in Lititz has earned a reputation for high-quality ice cream in an old-fashioned setting. Alan says that in their first six weeks of business last summer the parlor sold an average of 250 gallons of ice cream a week. That's work for a lot of happy cows!

Although the ice cream business dwindled through the winter, they are now making 100 gallons a week, and it will increase steadily as hot weather returns and ice cream eaters start longing for a delicious treat.

Since there had not been a true ice cream parlor in the area for awhile, Alan says he doesn't know if the crowds they got last summer were just "ice cream starved curiosity seekers. We didn't know we'd get the mobs we did." Of course, mobs are what the owners of the new business like, even

though it means keeping the ice cream freezer working overtime.

Neither Alan nor Nancy had ever run a business before their venture. Alan, a 1961 dairy production graduate of Penn State, and Nancy, an elementary education graduate of Bloomsburg State, were pursuing a more traditional life. Alan had worked for 18 years with Shell Chemical in their animal health research department, and Nancy had left teaching to raise their family which now consists of Amy, 13; Andy, 11; and Owen, 10. They were happily settled in New Jersey.

The Sechrist family had always enjoyed ice cream, and the idea of an ice cream parlor had been in their minds for about three years. A folk art painter, Nancy had attended the Craft Fair in Lititz with her family several summers ago, and when Alan and the children went off to find an ice cream cone, they found the selection very limited. That was the beginning of the transformation.

They decided from the start that they would serve only a high-quality product, and actually wanted to make their ice cream from scratch. That proved impractical because of the necessity

of pasteurizing and homogenizing the mix, which would have meant two additional pieces of equipment. They compromised by purchasing a high-quality mix from Crowley's.

Alan is the chief ice cream maker, and earned that title by attending Penn State's 10 week short course on ice cream making, which teaches the finer points of making ice cream, testing it and keeping it correct for serving.

Using a 14-percent butterfat mix, the Sechrists have produced a rich ice cream that meets their high standards.

"Most people appreciate the fact that our ice cream is different," Alan says. He added that they had originally wanted to make 16-percent ice cream which is made by just one other business in the county, but decided the 14-percent had just the flavor they liked.

Alan and Nancy use only first quality, natural flavorings. Nancy says, "Alan creates his own flavors - they are top of the line. We are both very conscientious about what we do." All flavors must meet their approval before being offered to the public.

Asked how they decide which kinds of ice cream to make, Alan replies, "We have our own ideas on what we want to make, and customers are asking for some kinds." They offer 16 flavors at a time, with 10 of those consistent, with the remaining ones changing according to season and demand.

Vanilla remains the flavor they make most often, but that is primarily because it serves as the basis for all their sundaes, sodas, floats and other enticing concoctions.

Oreo cookie ice cream is the current best seller. Alan adds, "Customers like variegated ice creams. They have a sweet tooth." Mocha fudge and butterscotch are two other best sellers.

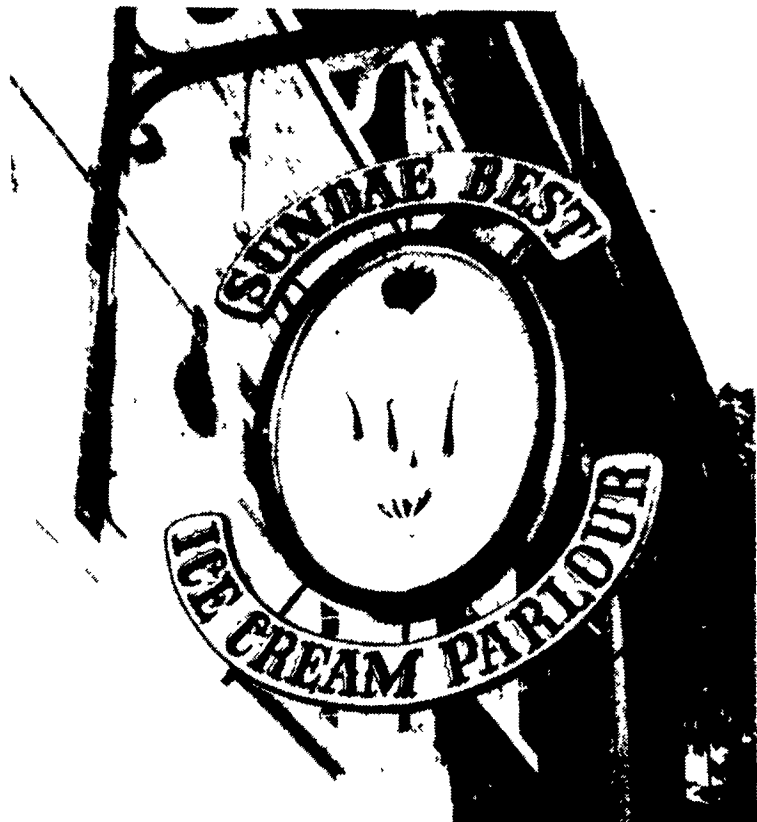
Sundaes are perhaps their biggest sellers in the parlor. Nancy makes chocolate fudge sauce from scratch because she couldn't find any commercially available that suited her. The sauce can also be purchased to take home.

For those who may have forgotten the difference, a float is simply soda with two dips of ice cream. A soda, according to Alan, is "a more elegant drink. It is made with carbonated water and syrup with some ice cream dissolved in it to make a creamy base. Then more ice cream and whipped cream are added to finish it off. "It takes longer to make and it is a lot prettier," Alan says.

Asked if any flavors have not



Alan Sechrist, owner of the Sundae Best ice cream parlor with wife Nancy, is the chief ice cream maker. Here he pours mix into the freezer, the first step in the process to produce high-quality ice cream for use in the shop.



The Sundae Best is the area's newest ice cream parlor, offering delicious ice cream in a true "parlor" setting. Located on North Broad Street in Lititz, the Sundae Best caters to both locals and tourists and features a wide array of sundaes, sodas and other luscious ice cream treats.



Nancy puts some of her homemade hot fudge sauce on a sundae. The fudge sauce is just one of many good-tasting toppings to make a sundae to remember. Nancy is also chief chef, responsible for the simple but delicious and fresh food menu.



Here is one satisfied customer. One-year-old Nichole Schwartz accepts a taste of a Sundae Best ice cream cone from her mother Tina. Father Jeff waits out of camera range to take over if Nicole can't finish. For those who like their ice cream "to go" there are tables outside the shop.

been successful, Alan answers candidly, "We made banana and it was a disaster. It got icy and we ended up throwing it away."

Alan explained that the ingredients used affect the freezing point, therefore, each batch, and each flavor, requires a lot of individual attention. The alcohol in rum raisin ice cream, and the oil in pecan or peanut butter, all react differently as they freeze.

An Emery Thompson ice cream freezer, of post World War II vintage is the hub of the operation. Alan says it is a tough machine which works well, pointing out, "It takes some experience with the machine to get it right."

As Alan explains the process it becomes evident that it is a job which requires his constant attention. "I learned at Penn State to

(Turn to Page B4)

## Homestead Notes