

# The University Creamery: THE Place To Go For Fresh Ice Cream

BY SALLY BAIR

**Lancaster Co. Correspondent**  
**UNIVERSITY PARK** — The University Creamery is a fixture on the campus of The Pennsylvania State University. It has a reputation for having the finest ice cream around, and is THE place to go when visiting Penn State.

Ray Binkley, manager for The Creamery, says it is second only to the football team in popularity among alumni and students.

It is fitting that July Ice Cream Month finds The Creamery instituting two new features — real, old-fashioned milkshakes and ice cream sundaes.

Binkley says the new items are being offered in an attempt to increase the volume sold through the retail store. Store hours have also been expanded until 10 p.m., a change that has already had an impact on the amount of ice cream sold.

One of the reasons which necessitates adding longer hours and other innovations is a drop in milk consumption within the University. Binkley says, "Kids are drinking less milk because they are offered more choices by the Food Services Department." For instance, he said they now consume 5,000 gallons of orange juice a week, a drink with free flowing dispensers available at each meal, right next to the milk and soft drink dispensers.

But it is ice cream that one thinks of when the word Creamery is mentioned. What makes the ice cream so special? Binkley doesn't even need to think about it. "Everything is fresh, and it takes

just four days from the cow to the store." Furthermore, 99 percent of the ingredients are real, including flavorings, adding up to a real treat. The ice cream tests 14.1 percent fat, 10.5 percent solids not-fat, 16.7 percent sugar, 0.25 percent stabilizer and 41.55 percent total solids.

Binkley says that the creamery is one of the "largest ice cream dipping stores in the country," and notes that on a football weekend, they will dip 6,000 cones in one day. The next largest time of the year, according to a tour guide, is during the summer Arts Festival in July, when they dip 30,000 ice cream cones in a three-day period.

On a big weekend, it is not just dipping ice cream that keeps Creamery personnel busy. Binkley says they use two tons of dry ice when there is a home game to pack ice cream and other products to be taken home by alumni eager to keep that good taste as long as possible.

He noted, however, that buying patterns have changed in the last five years. Before interest rates climbed, loyal alumni would buy several hundred dollars worth of ice cream and cheeses to take home to friends and neighbors. Now, he says, the largest orders may be for just \$100 worth of products.

On football weekends, Binkley says, "We have unbelievable crowds and they have a lot of patience."

To prepare for these big weekends, Binkley tries to have a week's supply of ice cream ready. He laughs, "Ours never gets a

chance to get old."

Ice cream is not processed every day. The first step in the process is to make condensed milk to be used in the ice cream mix. On the second day the mix itself is prepared and allowed to set overnight. On the third and fourth day ice cream is processed, up to ten flavors a day, and on the fifth day the equipment is thoroughly cleaned. Milk processing is done one day a week in the summer, and four days a week in the winter.

Visitors to campus may be disappointed not to find their favorite flavor among those being offered on a given day. Without apology Binkley states, "I decide what to make. I try to listen to customers. I try to keep to the basics, but I get criticized." The most popular flavors are vanilla, chocolate, strawberry, butter pecan, bittersweet mint, variegated chocolate, and variegated peanut butter.

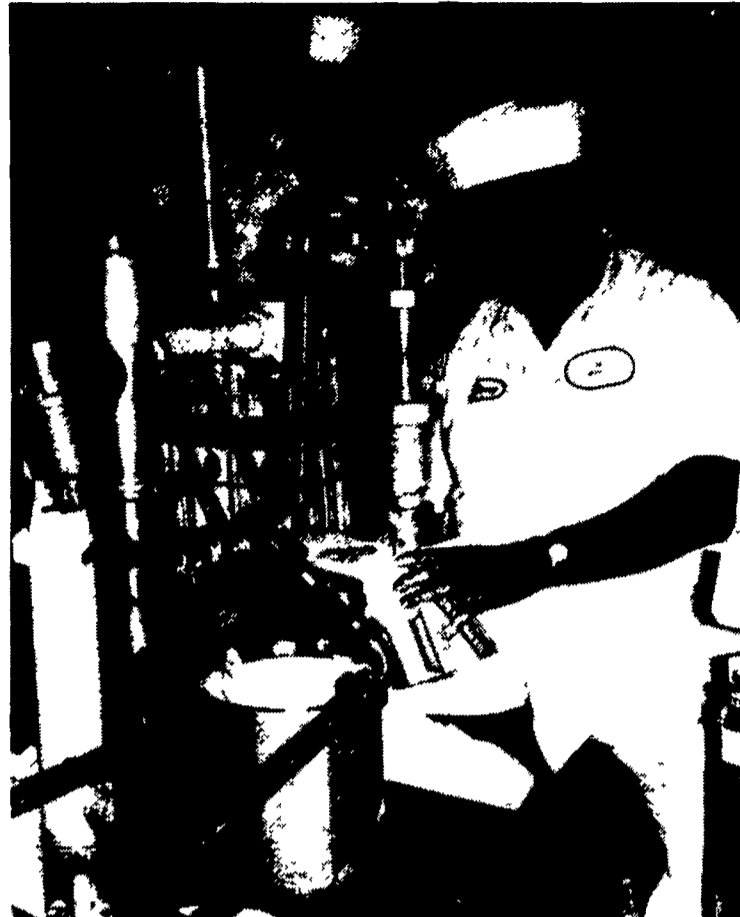
He mentions that there are regional favorites around the country, but one very popular flavor at the University is butter pecan. One reason may be that they use large, fancy pecan halves which are coated with real butter. A second reason could be that he puts in double weight, or 12 percent pecans, much more than most dairies. Butter Pecan happens to be a favorite of football coach Joe Paterno, who also favors peach.

New flavors appear from time to time, according to flavors available. "We use only the best, and go basically on past experience and on requests of people," Binkley says. Lemon chiffon is "one of the best we've ever made," according to Binkley. Another new flavor is brownie fudge nut, which he calls "delicious."

Two recent additions which have become classics are Cherry Quist, named for retired professor John Almqvist, a world renowned breeding expert, and Keeney Beany, named for Phil Keeney, when he retired as head of the department.

Part of Binkley's job is tasting all these wonderful flavors. He says, "I like ice cream, and I taste it all." Nevertheless, he says that on his present eating pattern he eats sweets just every fourth day, so he has cut down his ice cream consumption. He is hard pressed to come up with a favorite, pleading, "I never thought about it. I really can't say." Well, being surrounded daily by gallons of delicious ice cream must be somewhat overwhelming.

Although it is too soon to really know what the response will be to the new items, Binkley happily noted that 130 milkshakes were made on the first day. These shakes were made the "old-fashioned way," according to Binkley, with ice cream and milk.



Filling the familiar blue and white boxes, this University employee is skilled at adding just the right amount of ice cream.

There is almost no resemblance between a Creamery milkshake and the fast food variety. "We knew they would be popular," Binkley says happily.

The sundaes will be carry out, and Binkley says he already foresees a shortage of tables for those wishing to eat theirs on the premises. A wide variety of sundaes will be available.

The Creamery has always maintained a policy of one size and one flavor cones, but they now have a half size cone for kindergarten through second graders.

Milk for this operation comes from the University herd of 150 cows, which supplies about half the need. Since the need for dairy products increased dramatically during the school year, milk is purchased from another herd in the area.

Just this year the University herd became a member of Interstate Milk Producers Cooperative under an arrangement which allows it to use all its own milk. It will be easier, however, to maintain a steady supply, and now they will not need to produce as much cheese just to keep up with their milk supply. Binkley said, "I'll just order what I need."

Binkley notes, "When the University was the Farmers High School, they produced milk for the whole town, an arrangement that continued until 1958, when they got out of the 'town' business.

He adds that despite their reputation for quality ice cream,

milk is still the biggest product processed by volume, followed by cheese.

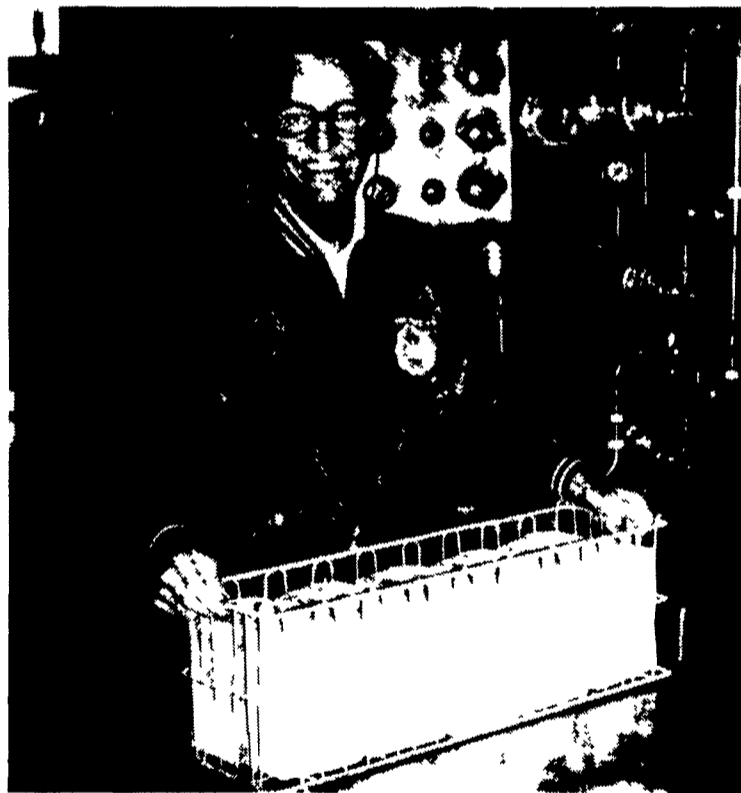
Binkley is himself a 1955 graduate of dairy science at Penn State and has spent his career working in the dairy industry as a cheesemaker and ice cream maker. When he attended Penn State he worked in the processing plant as part of his course work. Over the years this was dropped, and he said, "In the last 20 to 25 years there has been very little interaction between students and the Creamery. We are now reversing that and it makes me very happy. We will become a teaching dairy and are bringing back some courses in which students will work here."

He added, "The industry is screaming for it. It will cause some problems, but it makes us happy." The change in direction is being led by the new department head, Dr. Lowell Satterlee.

The Creamery is a self-sustaining enterprise and receives no funds from taxpayers. It follows all federal and state regulations and uses money from the sale of its products to pay salaries and expenses in operating the processing plant.

Last year during the holiday season, the University offered gift boxes of cheese to University personnel in another attempt to increase its volume, the only avenue for raising more money.

July may be Ice Cream Month, but at The University Creamery, ice cream is always Number One.



Ray Binkley, manager of the University Creamery, holds a basket of ice cream ready to be frozen and held in the freezer before moving on to the retail store.



These three 4-H'ers took advantage of their visit to Penn State and stopped at the Creamery to enjoy ice cream cones. From left they are: Heather Leiby, Schuylkill County; Cheryl Ferguson, Mercer County; and Kathi Smith, Huntingdon County.

## A 4-H'ers' View Of The Creamery

**Editor's Note:** The following news item was written by Karen Myers, a 15-year-old 4-H'er from Washington Boro in Lancaster County. It was published in the "Congress Times '86," a newsletter published by participants in Leadership Congress. For more on Leadership Congress, turn to page B20.

"Hey! Do you want to go to the Creamery?" These words could be heard all over the Penn State campus from 4-H'ers during the 1986 Leadership Congress.

From the no-fuss "vanilla" to the wild "watermelon sherbet," the Creamery offers a wide variety of ice cream flavors. The menu also recently added milkshakes. With seven different flavors to choose from, this is also a popular treat. Not only does the Creamery offer ice cream, but they also sell various dairy products and snacks.

The first time I was invited to join a group at the Creamery, I figured it would be just another chic college hangout for bored kids. Once I was there, however, I discovered that this place was different. I saw kids laughing, having fun and best of all, making new friends. The Creamery is the place to go when you are feeling up, or down, or basically normal. The Creamery certainly is a part of Penn State Proud.