

The Creamery of the Crop

OFF THE EATEN PATH by Rick Diggins



Photo by Hubert Bonnet

Growing up as one of 10 children on a small farm in Little Falls, Minnesota, Pumphouse Creamery owner Barb Zapzalka developed a respect for the environment, a taste for what's natural, and an eye to economy. For example, the family grew, harvested, and preserved much of its own fruits and vegetables. Zapzalka recalls that she didn't even visit a McDonald's until her late teens.

This rural background—including a penchant for hard work—is much in evidence as one visits Zapzalka's ice cream shop, Pumphouse Creamery, which has garnered such rave reviews in local media, it seems almost redundant to praise the establishment here. But praised it must be, for this place serves excellent ice cream.

"The milk and cream are organic," Zapzalka says, bought in recycled glass bottles from an organic dairy producer, Castle Rock Farms, near Osseo, Wisconsin.

The expiration date for the milk and cream from Castle Rock is just 10 days to two weeks from its original production (i.e., when the cow is milked), because of the minimal processing and pasteurization used. That's plenty of time, however, for the meticulous Zapzalka to transform this raw organic product into her wickedly good frozen treats.

"The other ingredients are all-natural," Zapzalka explains. "During the strawberry season, we use fresh, local strawberries. It's very seasonal."

Another example of freshness: The Blueberry Buttermilk ice cream has just been introduced, as local blueberries now are widely available.



Photo by Hubert Bonnet

Zapzalka is committed to using locally produced products whenever possible. She avoids putting corn syrup in her ice cream, and is even reluctant to use sugar. Her Maple Walnut ice cream, for example, is sweetened with locally produced pure maple syrup, with no sugar added.

Further, Zapzalka insists on blending more flavoring than sweetener into her ice cream. Try the Fresh Banana. You'll see what excellent results this philosophy churns out.

In short, you taste milk, cream, and all-natural flavorings when you indulge in Pumphouse Creamery ice cream. It's a heavenly experience, no matter what flavor tickles your fancy, and something any ice cream aficionado would trade eyeteeth to have again.

To complement your ice cream, choose one of more than 20 glass-bottled sodas, including such throwback brands as Sun Drop soda and Kickapoo Joy Juice.

Organic and all-natural are fine, but the engine that drives the Pumphouse Creamery's success is Zapzalka's boundless energy. She works 70 to 80 hours per week, she shares with a smile. She is involved with all aspects of making the ice cream and running her shop.

It's certainly not book learnin' in effect here. Zapzalka's total formal training in making ice cream was a two-day class.

"It's more my own recipes, and trial and error," Zapzalka states, "playing around, and making a lot of bad batches."

Zapzalka's previous career was as a software engineer.

"I wanted to do something more satisfying than sitting in a cubicle, and working at a corporate job," Zapzalka remarks.

Good thing for us Zapzalka chose ice cream.

Pumphouse Creamery

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www.pumphouse-creamery.com

Pumphouse Creamery is open the first Saturday in March through the Wednesday before Thanksgiving.



Photo by Hubert Bonnet

Here's a list of the ice cream flavors served at Pumphouse Creamery. A new flavor is added (and one dropped) every week, except for best-sellers, so call ahead if one of the more exotic concoctions on this list seems most appealing.

Vanilla

Chocolate

Chocolate Chip (currently, the Creamery's top seller)

Strawberry

Blueberry Buttermilk

Dulce De Leche with Praline Pecans

Oatmeal Cookie (handmade cookies)

Coconut AlmondMocha

Malt Chocolate and Malt Vanilla Swirl

Maple Walnut

Mint Chocolate Chip (with handmade truffles)

Fresh Banana (using organic bananas)

Cookies and Cream
Chocolate Peanut Butter
Chocolate Brownie (with Door County dried cherries)
Butter Pecan
Coffee (City Kid Java Beans)
Cherry Vanilla (with Door County dried cherries)
Fresh Squeezed Citrus Sorbet
Strawberry Mango Sorbet

Upcoming Flavors:

Apple Butter
Pumpkin (using fresh local pumpkins)