

Creating ice cream flavors with a lasting impression

By Nancy Lindahl, Enterprise Record

Hanna and I got to witness the birth of a new business Sunday as Oliver Wong rolled his pristine blue and white cart out of its trailer, installed light posts and hung out a ladder of flavor signs for his new ice cream business, Spoons.

The cart is small, but the flavors are fresh, and big – like Holy S'Mochas – a mocha ice cream with s'mores thrown in, inspired by the good flavors from summer camping.



Ice cream entrepreneur making a stir in Chico. Photo/Spoons

Wong, a Chico native, attended Chico State University, McAllister College in Minnesota, and Columbia University in New York before he realized college was not where he wanted to go. He returned to Chico and found work at Red Tavern and Bacio where he could pursue his interest in all things food related. In his spare time he studied web design at Chico State and started experimenting with homemade ice cream.

Raised in a family of noteworthy cooks, Wong is the son of Jann Reed and Lester Wong. (He is the nephew of *Lake Tahoe*

News Publisher Kathryn Reed.) He had always enjoyed being in the kitchen, and remembered making ice cream with rock salt and a hand-crank machine as a kid. Ice cream seemed simple, creative and a blank canvas for experimenting with flavors; a food category he could play with a long time before it got boring.

While researching the particulars of ice cream making, he discovered Penn State's Ice Cream Short Course and Penn State Berkey Creamery, the largest university creamery in the nation. The Ice Cream Short Course teaches ice cream science from "cow to cone" and has been educating generations of ice cream professionals since 1892. About 120 students take the class every year, (Wong graduated fifth in his class of 120), and the student roster includes representatives from the big names in ice cream: Haagen-Dazs, Ben & Jerry's, and Dairy Queen as well as a few young start-up entrepreneurs like Wong.

Returning to Chico, Wong upgraded from the family White Mountain handcrank ice cream maker to an Emory Thompson made-in-the-U.S.A. batch machine that can produce six quarts of ice cream every seven to eight minutes by pressing a button. In-between test batches of ice cream, Wong found an ice cream cart on Craig's List, a trailer for the cart and a freezer. He chose Straus Family Creamery from Tomales Bay for his cream, created his Spoons website and recruited his sister, Jacquelyn, to make signs for his ice cream flavors. In all, he's worked for about a year towards his goal of scooping premier gourmet ice cream for the citizens of Chico. Wong's long-term goal is to open a cafe called Spoons that serves food you can eat with a spoon; comfort food like soups, ice creams, puddings, risottos, but for now his focus is on ice cream and getting started.

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