

Florida on a Tankful: Love goes cold for ice cream

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You can't miss the star of Doug Shank's futuristic ice cream parlor.

Upon entering, all eyes focus on the 6-foot-tall silver tank standing watch over the assembly line. A white square sign, in the shape of an oversized square from the periodic table of elements, let's you know what's hiding inside: Nitrogen.

After all, this giant nitrogen tank has a big responsibility.

"The nitrogen boils at -320 degrees F," said Doug Shank, the owner and operator of [Sub Zero Ice Cream in Sarasota](#).

For ice cream lovers, Sub Zero is where their passion turns frigid.

"(It's) very, very cold," Doug confirmed.

His sweet confectionary takes liquid cream and flash freezes it before your eyes. Thus, making fresh ice cream.

"We have an original and a custard," Doug explained about the most popular creams to use.

The team behind the counter, some wearing sweaters to keep warm, grab liquid cream, that looks similar to coffee cream, and toss it into a metal mixing bowl.

Next, they add flavoring, pumped out of a bottle, similar to how trendy coffee stores add flavor. Next, they start mixing the two components into that metal bowl.

Each customer gets their own metal bowl to separate flavors and help eliminate a dangerous interaction for those with a food allergy.

“We can go to source containers, so we don’t have a cross contamination issue as well,” Doug said. Allergens can be removed from the process, while there is also a gluten-free version as well.

Sub Zero has more than 400 metal bowls, with Doug adding on busy days, he needs bring in an extra employee just to wash dishes.

“Here’s your cream with the chocolate and brownie bites,” explained one ice cream maker behind the counter as she used a whisk to blend the cream, chocolate flavor and pieces of small brownies.

The staff here is trained to “Do the Doug.” That’s an internal reminder to employees to keep talking and explaining to the customer exactly how their treat is hand created while they watch.

Once all the selections, like nuts and strawberries, are mixed together, it’s time for pedal power.

“3, 2, 1 ...” an attendant counts down before activating a pedal on the floor which sends a cloud of nitrogen into the bowl and begins to freeze the ice cream.

“It’s freezing the cream at negative 321 degrees,” she said. “It feels like if you were to stick your hands inside a freezer.”

The banging, mashing and shaping continues inside the metal bowl as the cream becomes frozen and thus, ice cream.

Using the nitrogen to freeze the ice cream so quickly, doesn’t allow any ice crystals to form, according to Doug. What you’re left with is a smooth blended taste, unlike any ice cream scooped from a gallon.

"I'm kind of a science nerd, so watching the nitrogen is pretty cool," said Tyler Poson from Sarasota.

While Tyler enjoys the chemistry aspect, while his friend, Brody is content to devour his.

"I just inhaled it," said Brody Bruke as he played with his plastic spoon inside the empty cup waiting for Tyler to finish his Sub Zero before leaving.

"People come in happy and they go out happier," Doug concluded.

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