

# Tampa Bay Times

## Cool weather doesn't deter ice cream lovers at Twistee Treat opening

By Beth N. Gray, Times Correspondent

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SPRING HILL — Opening on a sunny but decidedly chilly Monday, Twistee Treat director of operations Jonathan Carroll shrugged off the weather.

"We can eat ice cream in Florida all year round," Carroll declared.

Customers digging into frosty treats at flashy, circus-hued picnic tables in the parking lot at Mariner Square on Cortez Boulevard bore him out.

Brianne Swann of Spring Hill, dipping into a strawberry sundae, said the cool temperatures early last week inhibited her choice "not at all." Her little bundled-up cousin, 2-year-old Lakyn Lewis, smiled as she tidily scooped multicolored sprinkles from atop a dish of soft-churned vanilla.

Nearby, John Snizek, 80, spooning into a strawberry sundae heaped with whipped cream and dusted with nuts, said, "Never too cold for ice cream."

These and many of the other consumers had been shopping at Mariner Square, unaware that they were helping to launch the eighth Twistee Treat site in Florida since the company revitalized and set up headquarters in Orlando three years ago.

The 20- by 20-foot ice cream cone-shaped fiberglass structure — vanilla with chocolate topping — drew plenty of shoppers.

Their presence confirmed the choice to locate in a plaza parking lot, not the first time the company had chosen such a site, Carroll said.

With ice cream stands in Tampa, Orlando, Kissimmee and Davenport, Carroll said the company selected Spring



Hill because "the demographics on it worked."

What's special about Twistee Treat?

"We serve real ice cream," Carroll said.

Ice cream is decidedly creamier, richer and more palate pleasing than "the others," he said.

The former Twistee Treat chain made only the triumvirate flavors: vanilla, chocolate and strawberry. The new chain churns up 25 tastes.

"Customer were telling us they wanted more flavors," Carroll said.

Think German chocolate cake, piña colada, mocha cappuccino, cheesecake, blue goo and more. The same flavors are offered in remarkably silky nonfat and sugarless treats.

"The sugar-free is amazing," Carroll maintained.

A skeptical taster nodded in agreement.

The most popular flavor at each Twistee Treat outlet depends on customer demographics, Carroll said. Watching orders filled for cones, dishes and sundaes, he added: "I couldn't even guess (what flavor) it'll be here."

In addition to the variety of flavors, there are 20 to 25 toppings — Snickers, Oreos, KitKats, Thin Mints, coconut, among others — resulting in "thousands of combinations you can have," the operations director added.

Standouts on the menu are an ice cream waffle taco and a cookie ice cream sandwich, the waffles and cookies baked on the premises daily.

With a nod to protein, Twistee Treat offers one hot item: a Nathan's hot dog slider.

As for prices, Carroll urged inquiring customers to read the menu board and compare with soft-serve competitors.

"For the value, you can't touch it," he said.

Twistee Treat expects to build and open 15 to 20 stands next year. An opening in Tarpon Springs is planned within a month.

*Beth Gray can be reached at graybethn@earthlink.net.*

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## >>fast facts

### **Twistee Treat**

The shop serves 25 flavors of soft-serve ice cream in cones and cups, and various frozen desserts at an outdoor counter and with drive-through service. Opens at 11:30 a.m. daily; closing time to be determined. Mariner Square, 13200 Cortez Blvd., Spring Hill. [twistee>treat.com](http://twistee>treat.com). Visit their Facebook page, Twistee Treat USA.

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