



ICE CREAM JOURNALS

The trouble with living in the Hudson Valley in the summertime.

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SUMMER OF 1975 I'm seven years old. My French mother has a strange ritual. She scoops out half-empty boxes of Breyers coffee ice cream into wine glasses, covers them with tin foil, and puts them in the freezer. According to her, this conserves the ice cream and will increase my ice cream anticipation. Another way she likes to make ice cream last longer is to mush it into soup. (*C'est comme un milkshake!*) My father favors green ice creams, pistachio and mint chocolate chip, flavors that baffle our chocolate- and vanilla-loving taste buds.

SUMMER OF 1981—FRENCH RIVIERA My mom and I spend a month in Nice, France, stalking the Rolling Stones and catching up with her family and old girlfriends. We sit at outdoor cafés in the afternoon and order up exotic *coupe de glace* creations like Peach Melbas. I learn that a French scoop is about half the size of an American scoop.

SUMMER OF 1987—SOMEWHERE IN ITALY On my first solo trip to Europe, I eat a packaged gelato cone for breakfast at a train station because it seems like the safest bet in train station fare. No one mocks me. It's my lira, my craving. I love ice cream. I love Italy. I love being 19 and having the freedom to eat ice cream in the morning.

SUMMER OF 1996—SINGLE AND DATING IN MANHATTAN My new boyfriend, Tom, and I have developed a late-night ritual that clashes with my perpetual low-carb dieting. After watching the 11 o'clock news together, we go across the street to the deli and pick out a pint of Ben & Jerry's ice cream. We've been dating for eight months and August is turning into one hot and fattening month. I revert to low-fat Columbo yogurt or Tasti Delite when the pounds creep back up.

I have been a yo-yo dieter for most of my life, losing and gaining the same 15 pounds over and over. I traditionally start my health regime after Labor Day, when ice cream season ends. In the fall and winter there are fewer temptations. (I love pumpkin pie, but I don't want to eat it every day.)

SUMMER OF 2003—HUDSON VALLEY I'm five months' pregnant with my second child with Tom, now my husband, and settling into a new home. With all the ice cream possibilities the area has to offer, my cravings go haywire. I can't go through Saugerties without a large serving of maple-walnut soft-serve from Pat's Place (now called Cups & Cones). I discover the Ice Cream Station in Phoenicia and taste their Piece of Cake flavor for the first time.

SUMMER OF 2006 The problem with living in the Hudson Valley in the summertime is that there are too many good ice cream stands to choose

from, so we set out on a mission to try them all before summer ends. I try to limit my "premium high-fat ice cream" to weekends and holidays only, testing out low-fat options whenever I can, but Tom is a different animal. He likes to stay in shape, but eating fat-free ice cream is beneath him.

Chocolate Cheers on Route 28 in Kingston has turned us into ice cream junkies. With a chocolate fondue fountain and a sundae topping buffet, it's a real-world candy land for kids. The free chocolate samples don't help.

One night, the woman behind the counter gives Tom such a generous helping that he feels the need to warn a small group of motorcyclists sitting at the picnic tables outside.

"Ya gotta watch out for that lady! She's got a reputation around here!"

"Oh, yeah?" asks one of the bikers.

"Yeah! For giving you the biggest damn scoop of ice cream around!"

Ice cream has a way of making him delirious.

Ice cream escapades go well with monotonous errands (schlepping to Adam's Fairacre Farms or Price Chopper) and family outings—we can't go to the Catskill Game Farm without stopping off at Kaatskill Cider Mill in Catskill.

What's happening to Horn of Plenty? It's the place on Route 28 with the towering vanilla ice cream cone that my two-year-old daughter always refers to as the big Ice King Kone. A handwritten sign in the window says, "Deli closed." How could they do this in the heat of summer? Couldn't they at least wait until September to renovate? The place never looked inviting, but it has the best cookie-dough flavor and the creamiest, most addictive fat-free coffee ice cream. I remember Tom hobbling to the car balancing a heaping waffle cone filled with cookie dough in one hand, chocolate-covered strawberries and my fat-free coffee in the other. We had to shut the car door quickly to keep the flies from attacking our take-out treats.

Sometimes when we are in the car eating ice cream, duel tantrums erupt. My two-year-old's super-size kiddie cone is overflowing onto her seat, and she screams if I wipe any off. My four-year-old shrieks if she can't nibble on her dad's waffle cone while he's driving. Not the relaxing ice cream escape I envisioned, but a scene that is played out at least three times a week. I take a deep breath—okay, sometimes I take the deep, cleansing breath only after screaming, "All done!"—and remember that it's only ice cream, and car seats covers are washable.

Can I blame them for being so passionate? The kids are third-generation ice cream addicts, with no less compulsion than I had at their age. Besides, winter is long up here, and gives us plenty of time to reform (or make over) our diet while we indulge in the greasy delicacies at the annual Garlic Fest in Saugerties, in September, and supercrusty homemade apple pies and cupcakes (to teach the kids about sharing) at every holiday bake sale.