

scene

Here's the Scoop!

A PEOPLE panel gives America's hometown ice creams the sweet test and names the very best

THE JUDGES

Daryl Sabara & Alexa Vega

Now starring as the intrepid Cortez sibs in the summer hit *Spy Kids 3-D: Game Over*, Miami-born Vega, 15, and Californian Sabara, 11, were a study in ice cream tasting contrasts: She took dainty bites and deliberated for minutes before rendering a judgment; he devoured each and every helping. "To me, all the ice creams we sampled were like, yeah!" says Daryl. To which his big-screen sis replied, "If it's edible, he likes it."



Rocco DiSpirito

For Manhattan chef DiSpirito, 36, star of the NBC reality show *The Restaurant*, no taste sensation beats ice cream done right. "When you're licking the cone and closing your eyes, it can take you back to your childhood," he says.



Jane and Michael Stern

The Sterns—authors of more than a dozen books on all-American cuisine and the Roadfood column in *Gourmet* magazine—know their scoops. Michael's frozen favorite is ginger-flavored. "I'd have it at my last supper," he says.



Tom Palchak

Palchak, 45, who oversees the production of 225,000 gallons of ice cream a year at Penn State University Creamery in State College, Pa., has learned to indulge in moderation. "Ice cream is a treat, not a meal replacement," he says.

Homer Simpson

Son Bart advised close supervision when we tapped Homer, 39, for our panel. "Dad thought the holiday gingerbread-house competition was a gingerbread *eating* competition," says Bart. "It took six cops to bring him in."



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THE COMPETITION

After PEOPLE correspondents across the country nominated their favorite local ice creams, we picked 16 finalists and sent them to our panelists for judging. Then a select group of hungry staffers at our New York City offices conducted identical tests, and their votes were averaged to count as a single vote on the panel. The hotly contested results at right are out of a possible top score of five scoops.

HANDEL'S HOMEMADE ICE CREAM

Youngstown, Ohio
330-788-0356

CHOCOLATE PECAN

"The crunch makes it stand out," says Alexa. Palchak lauds the "smooth, creamy" texture and the "nice pecan inclusion."

SPRINKLES OF PALM BEACH
Palm Beach, Fla.
561-659-1140

TRIPLE CHOCOLATE SUPREME

Our top-scoring treat. "When you need to mainline ice cream or break your diet," says Jane Stern, "this would be the call."



BONNIE BRAE ICE CREAM
Denver
303-777-0808

VANILLA

Jane Stern found it to be "like white satin, lovely and rich." Palchak, on the other hand, marked it down for "weak body."



AMY'S ICE CREAMS
Austin, Texas
512-458-6895

KALEIDESCAPE

"Mmmm," says Daryl of this cherry-cocoa combo from a store he loved visiting while filming *Spy Kids* in Texas.



ORIGINAL PAINTER'S HOMEMADE ICE CREAM
North Myrtle Beach, S.C.
843-272-6934

BLACK CHERRY

"Not bad," says Penn State's Palchak, but one finicky PEOPLE editor deemed it "straight from the supermarket."



BASSETTS ICE CREAM COMPANY
Philadelphia
215-864-2771

VANILLA

"I'm a real sucker for the flecks of vanilla. You can taste the nuggets," says Jane Stern. But Palchak called the texture "gummy."



FOUR SEAS ICE CREAM
Centerville, Mass.
508-775-1394

CHIP CHOCOLATE

Palchak praised the ice cream's "nice all-around flavor" but subtracted points for this Cape Cod favorite's "slightly coarse" consistency.



DAVE AND ANDY'S HOMEMADE ICE CREAM
Pittsburgh
412-681-9906

GOLDEN ALE ESPRESSO CHIP

An acquired taste, apparently. One PEOPLE writer called it "criminal"; Alexa was diplomatic: "It's different."



TILLAMOOK COUNTY CREAMERY ASSOCIATION
Tillamook, Ore.
503-815-1300

CHOCOLATE PEANUT BUTTER

Simpson loved the flavor combo: "What's the catch? Do I have to sell my soul to PEOPLE magazine? Deal."



MITCHELL'S ICE CREAM
San Francisco
415-648-2300

CANTALOUPE

This exotic flavor struck some judges as, well, weird. *Spy Kid* Daryl couldn't ID the flavor—"Is it orange?"—but Alexa decreed it one of her favorites.

