

A Cool Topic: Ice Cream!

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"Ice-cream is exquisite--what a pity it isn't illegal."
-attributed to Voltaire, 1694-1778



Iced desserts have been around for over two thousand years in one form or another, though mostly considered something only for royalty until the mid-17th century. Ice cream and flavored ice recipes started to appear in English cookbooks by the early 18th century. The first known reference was in *Mrs. Mary Eale's Receipts* published in London in 1718. Confectioners experimented with flavorings, from oysters to breadcrumbs to asparagus, but the most common flavors were fruit, especially apricot.

Ice cream made its way to America at least by 1744, when William Black ate at the Maryland colonial governor's home and wrote in his diary, "... after which came a Dessert no less Curious; Among the Rarities of which it was Compos'd, was some fine Ice Cream which, with the Strawberries and Milk, eat most Deliciously." The first ice cream shop in the Colonies was established in New York by an Italian immigrant in 1770 and the first advertisement for the treat was in 1774. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson had ice cream making equipment in their inventories and the Washingtons served ice cream at many functions at the President's House in Philadelphia. In the summer of 1790, when New York City was still the US Capital, a merchant reported that according to his records George Washington spent \$200 (a little under \$5600 today) on ice cream.

Ices or iced cream were often molded in tins molds in the shape of fruits and stored, if possible, in ice houses (rare in the 18th century except for on large estates like George Washington's Mount Vernon) or ice wells. Ice cream was runnier than we are used to due to this lack of refrigeration. The recipe was poured into a metal can called a sabotiere or sorbetier (see graphic) that was placed in a bucket with ice (obtained from frozen waterways) and salt. As the mixture turned more frozen, it was scraped down the side of the container until more uniform, then it could be served in special ice cups, similar to teacups.



Two 18th-century receipts (recipes) for making ice cream (keep in mind that spelling was not uniform, yet):

Take two pewter basons, one larger than the other; the inward one must have a close cover, into which you are to put your cream, and mix it with raspberries, or whatever you like best, to give it a flavour and a colour. Sweeten it to your palate; then cover it close, and set it into the larger bason. Fill it with ice, and a handful of salt: let it stand in this ice three quarters of an hour, then uncover it, and stir the cream well together: cover it close again, and let it stand half an hour longer, after that turn it into your plate. These things are made at the pewterers.

---*The Art of Cookery Made Plain & Easy*, Hannah Glasse, first edition, 1747



Pare, stone, and scald twelve ripe apricots, beat them in a fine marble mortar. Put to them six ounces of double-refined sugar, a pint of scalding cream, work it through a hair sieve. Put it into a tin that has a close cover, when you see your cream grow thick round the edges of your tin, stir it, and set it again till all grows quite thick. When your cream is to be turned out of, then put on the lid. Have ready another tub with ice and salt in as before, put your mould in the middle and lay your ice under and over it, let it stand four or five hours. Dip your tin in warm water when you turn it out. If it be summer you must not turn it out till the moment you want it. You may use any sort of fruit if you have not apricots, only observe to work it fine.

---*The Experienced English Housekeeper*, Elizabeth Raffald, 1769

Easy Homemade Ice Cream

You can make ice cream at home without special equipment.

Take a 16 oz. glass jar* and ADD:

- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 ½ tablespoons granulated sugar
- 1 ½ teaspoons vanilla extract
- A pinch of salt

1. Screw the lid on tightly.
2. Shake the jar until the cream thickens and almost doubles in size, 4 to 5 minutes.
3. Freeze for 3 hours, or until hardened.

You can also add:

- ½ cup fresh fruit, like raspberries or cut-up apricots, or jam before freezing ;
- 1 tsp. chocolate syrup and/or peanut butter before shaking or swirl in some melted chocolate before freezing;
- 1 Tbsp. of nuts
- spices like cinnamon, nutmeg or cardamom
- herbs or tea steeped in ½ the cream (let cool, then strain before adding to rest of cream to shake)

The possibilities are up to you!

* Like a clean spaghetti sauce jar or a Mason jar with a good lid. Did you know that the Mason jar was invented in the mid-19th century by John Landis Mason, who was born in NJ?!