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# The nation's largest Indian ice cream maker is right here in N.J. Here's the scoop.

Updated: Sep. 15, 2023, 9:16 a.m. | Published: Sep. 13, 2023, 7:00 a.m.



A badshahi falooda, a traditional Indian dessert, drink sits on the counter inside Kwality Ice Cream shop in Edison on Thursday, September 7, 2023. Julian Leshay | For NJ Advance Media



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By **Peter Genovese | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com**

A multi-colored cassata — a spumoni-like dessert made of vanilla, pistachio and tutti-frutti flavors — beckoned from the counter at [Kwality Ice Cream](#) in Edison, but I was fixated on the 28 flavors in the ice cream shop's display case.

Specifically, the rose petal ice cream, fresh, fragrant and fabulous. I tried all 28 flavors — tough job, someone had to do it — including cashew raisin, fig and walnuts, sitafel (custard apple) and lychee.

But the rose petal was the clear winner. It's the best ice cream flavor I've had in the past two, three years. You'll find it at the bright, cheery Kwality shop, shoehorned into an Oak Tree Road strip mall that includes Twinkle Beauty Salon and Phil-Am Mart.

New Jersey's considerable Indian population — about 400,000 people — know about Kwality, the largest maker of Indian ice cream in the country, according to its owners. The non-Indian population? Not so much. An ask on our Jersey Eats Facebook page resulted in just two mentions of Indian ice cream brands or shops.

"I consider myself a foodie and don't know of Indian ice cream," went one comment.

Join the crowd.

Kwality did rank No. 21 on our list of the state's [65 best ice cream shops](#). We singled out the Alphonso king mango flavor, a "sweet, fruity treat." Before that list, though, we've never given Indian ice cream its due.

Kwality now operates 24 ice cream stores — four each in California and Texas, the rest in Colorado, Washington state, Michigan, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Ohio. Three more are expected to open by the end of the year. There is one other Jersey shop, in Kendall Park. The Kwality web site modestly calls it "the finest all natural ice cream in the world."

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Workers fill containers with freshly made ice cream inside the Kwaliti Foods manufacturing plant in Edison on Thursday, September 7, 2023. Julian Leshay | For NJ Advance Media

Kwaliti ice cream was initially made at a 600-square-foot space at the back of the Oak Tree Road store. Demand forced a move to a 4,000-square-foot facility in Edison, then to the current 10,000-square-foot plant.



There are actually two companies with “Kwality” in their names, one based in India, one in this country. When the Kwality brand was introduced in India in the 1950s, “it awakened a nationwide infatuation,” according to The New York Times. “During sweltering Indian summers, people would dash to the lit-up cases of Kwality at their local dime store for a block of nutty butterscotch ice cream, or the triple-layered ice cream bar called cassata.”

Kanti Parekh worked for Kwality as chief food technologist. In 1995, Unilever acquired the brand. Parekh moved to New Jersey as a consultant for packaged foods, but ice cream was always in the back of his mind. He opened the Edison store in 2003. Unilever’s Kwality Wall’s and Edison-based Kwality are not affiliated with each other.

The Edison manufacturing plant is packed with shiny batch processors and a massive hardening freezer, where just-made ice cream is placed for six to eight hours at negative-40 degrees. The process starts with a mix from Cream-O-Land Dairy. Then flavors, ingredients and coloring are added. Kwality’s ice cream contains 14 percent butterfat, compared to 10-12 percent for most other ice creams.

The higher butterfat content results in “better mouth feel, texture and taste,” according to Anand Parekh, Kanti’s son, who now runs the operation. Another difference between Kwality and many mainstream ice creams is that the former uses no eggs in any of its flavors.

There are other Indian ice cream brands out there, including Princeton-based Heritage Kulfi and Brooklyn-based Malai, which can be found in various Whole Foods locations. Don’t go looking for Kwality at Whole Foods or supermarkets in general; for the time being, Kwality’s ice cream can be purchased only at the Edison shop.

One New Jersey ice cream shop where you can find Indian-accented ice cream is Das Creamery in Budd Lake, owned by Komal Das. The store also appeared on our list of the state’s [65 best ice cream shops](#).



Eight flavors of ice cream sit inside a freezer in Kquality Ice Cream shop in Edison on Thursday, September 7, 2023. Julian Leshay | For NJ Advance Media

A total of 28 flavors can be found at the Edison shop; Kquality is capable of making 70-plus flavors. The three most popular: meetha paan (made with areca nuts, slaked lime and other flavoring agents), butterscotch and mango. There are mainstream flavors, such as chocolate, vanilla, Ferrero Rocher, and cookies and cream, among others. Kquality also

does a brisk business in kulfi (a denser ice cream) and falooda, a frozen dessert made of noodles, basil seeds and ice cream.

In all, Kwality churns out about 5,000 gallons of ice cream every week; Anand Parekh figures that's about 70,000-80,000 scoops. Ice cream bound for other states is loaded onto refrigerated trucks where the temperature is kept at minus 20 degrees. Computers back in Edison monitor the temperature.

Kwality supplies area caterers and banquet halls, plus local Indian restaurants, with its ice cream,





Anand Parekh, center, and his father, Dr. Kanti Parekh, left, co-owners of Kwaliti Foods, talk about their ice cream inside Kwaliti Ice Cream shop in Edison on Thursday, September 7, 2023. Julian Leshay | For NJ Advance Media

"Our business model is to focus on the Sun Belt," explains Anand Parekh, 41. "Going into California, Texas, Georgia, North Carolina, Florida. The idea is not to open a million stores, it's to identify the areas where the South Asian market is, where the foot traffic is high."



Why not a store in Jersey City, with its considerable Indian population?

"The rents are too high," Parekh replies.

The same goes for Manhattan, although there is a Kquality store in Queens.

For an ice cream shop, the ideal outside temperature is 80 to 94 degrees, according to Parekh.

"Anything above 95, sales drop because lots of people don't want to go out of the house," he says.

Speaking of which, it was smoking hot when I stepped out of the shop and into my car. My biggest mistake on this assignment: not buying a quart or two of that rose petal ice cream to take home. I think the heat scrambled my brain, or something.

Next time I'm in the area, I won't make the same mistake.

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