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THE KESSLER REPORT

Master Your 'Cone At Home' Game, Win At Ice Cream

Here's how to get the most of your ice cream maker

Aug 13, 2014 1:00 pm

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Ice cream sensei Tyler Malek will whip your ice cream game into fighting shape. It's hot out there! + ENLARGE

If you're the type of person that thinks Baskin-Robbins is the be-all end-all of ice cream, you may want to skip the rest of this column. If you've got an open mind and think outside of the scoop shop, I'm about to turn you into a home ice cream superstar. Well, not me personally. Tyler Malek is your ice cream sensei, dispensing tips, tricks and a dope recipe for peach and cherry ice cream.

Malek is the creative director of Salt & Straw, Portland's legendary artisanal ice cream shop (and soon to be in LA, too), which means he's the guy creating awesome flavors based on local ingredients like goat cheese/marionberry/habanero, bone marrow/smoked cherry and a whole lineup of wacky Thanksgiving flavors. I hopped on the phone with young Tyler (dude's only 26) and got the lowdown on becoming an at-home pint champion.

All Your Base Are Belong to You

Getting your base right is like learning to shoot a free throw in basketball. It's all about the fundamentals. "Getting that core right is key," says Malek, "then you can do whatever you want with the flavor." That means figuring out the right ratios of cream to milk and sugar to dairy. Malek recommends aiming for less than 17% butterfat. If you go higher, you're churning butter (which doesn't sound all that terrible...) and too much fat is the #1 most reported problem amongst home ice cream makers. To get that magic 17% for a quart of ice cream, mix 1 1/2 cups of heavy cream (40% butterfat) and 1 1/2 cups of whole milk. Add in a cup of sugar (more on that below) and you're good to go.

The Real Pros Use Multiple Sugars

Without getting too technical, different sugars give you different results. For a good standard base at home, Tyler recommends using 1/2 cup of white sugar, 1/4 cup of brown sugar, and 1/4 cup of corn syrup. "The brown sugar is going to add a little bit of flavor to the sweetness and the corn syrup is going to dial it down, but it's still going to help in the freezing process." Invert sugars like corn syrup have more viscosity and help hold the mixture together. Other options include golden syrup, molasses, honey and Tyler's favorite: tapioca syrup.

Stabilizers Work Like Warren G: They Regulate

Malek recommends using a stabilizer because it helps trap water in the mixture. That keeps out the large ice crystals and prevents the whole thing from becoming an icy mess. Egg yolks are great and probably chillin' in your fridge right now, but they impart an eggy/custardy flavor to the base which you may or may not want. Malek prefers xanthan gum, found in the baking aisle. Other options include cornstarch or guar gum.

Don't Cook the Cream

"Cook everything together without the cream added," says the ice cream guru. "That's because once the cream starts heating up, the fat gets all kinds of screwed up." Also, if you're using xanthan gum, add it when the liquid is cold. It's much harder to work with in hot liquid.

Flavor Can Be Infused All Throughout the Process

Don't think ice cream is just a plain base plus mix-ins — you can add in flavoring at any point during the process. Says Malek: "Milk takes on flavor really well. So does cream." He gives his coffee recipe as a great example of this: you can steep the coffee in the cream or the milk; you can infuse the sugar with the coffee beans; you can make a cold-brew and mix that into the base after it's ready. Play around with different "activation points" and find out what works best for you. Tyler is quick to point out that ice cream making is more like cooking than baking, in that you can experiment and not have to worry about ruining the final product because tiny measurements were off.

Don't Be Afraid of Flavor

Flavors don't really come out until the ice cream starts to melt a little, so you'll never be able to gauge it right out of the freezer. Make sure to go heavy with your flavors in the mixing process and they'll shine through once it's time to taste your creation.

Once It's Ready, Flip it Over in the Freezer

This one is genius. To create an airlock against the off-flavors that your freezer has been collecting, take whatever container you're storing the finished product in and flip it over in the freezer. This creates a barrier against the circulating air in the freezer and locks your flavor in while keeping "freezer funk" out.

Peach and Cherry Stone Ice Cream Recipe

Ingredients:

Peach Ice Cream Base

- 1 1/2 cups heavy cream
- 1 1/2 cups whole milk
- 1/2 cup white cane sugar
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup corn syrup or tapioca syrup
- 3/4 teaspoon xanthan gum
- 1 very ripe peach, skinned and puréed
- About 10-20 dark sweet cherry stones (pits), save the cherries

To Taste

- salt, cinnamon, amaretto and/or chopped walnuts (optional)
1. To prep the cherry stones, crush them by beating them with a rolling pin.
 2. Prep the sugar, brown sugar, salt and xanthan by gently mixing them together.
 3. Pour the milk in a pot, whisk in the sugar/xanthan mixture and add the cherry stones.
 4. Add the corn syrup.
 5. Heat the milk stirring constantly until it thickens and the sugar is completely melted into the milk.
 6. Strain the cooked milk mixture through a mesh strainer to remove all of the cherry stones. They'll impart a really pleasant flavor to the milk.
 7. Add the cream and the peach purée and cool this ice cream base in a refrigerator for 12-24 hours.

Churning the Ice Cream

Ingredients:

- Peach Ice Cream base
- 10-20 dark sweet cherries + about 1 tablespoon of sugar

1. To start, chop the cherries and toss them in a bit of sugar to macerate them; this will loosen them up a bit and make them even yummier to put on top of the ice cream.
2. Freeze the ice cream using your ice cream machine's instructions.
3. Churn the ice cream until it is a soft-serve consistency.
4. Fold the cherries into the ice cream and package into container.
5. The ice cream is ready to serve in the soft state or can be frozen overnight to get a scoopable texture.

Note: Cherry stones/pits can be toxic in high volume. Tyler is not worried about that fact, but, y'know, be careful and stuff...

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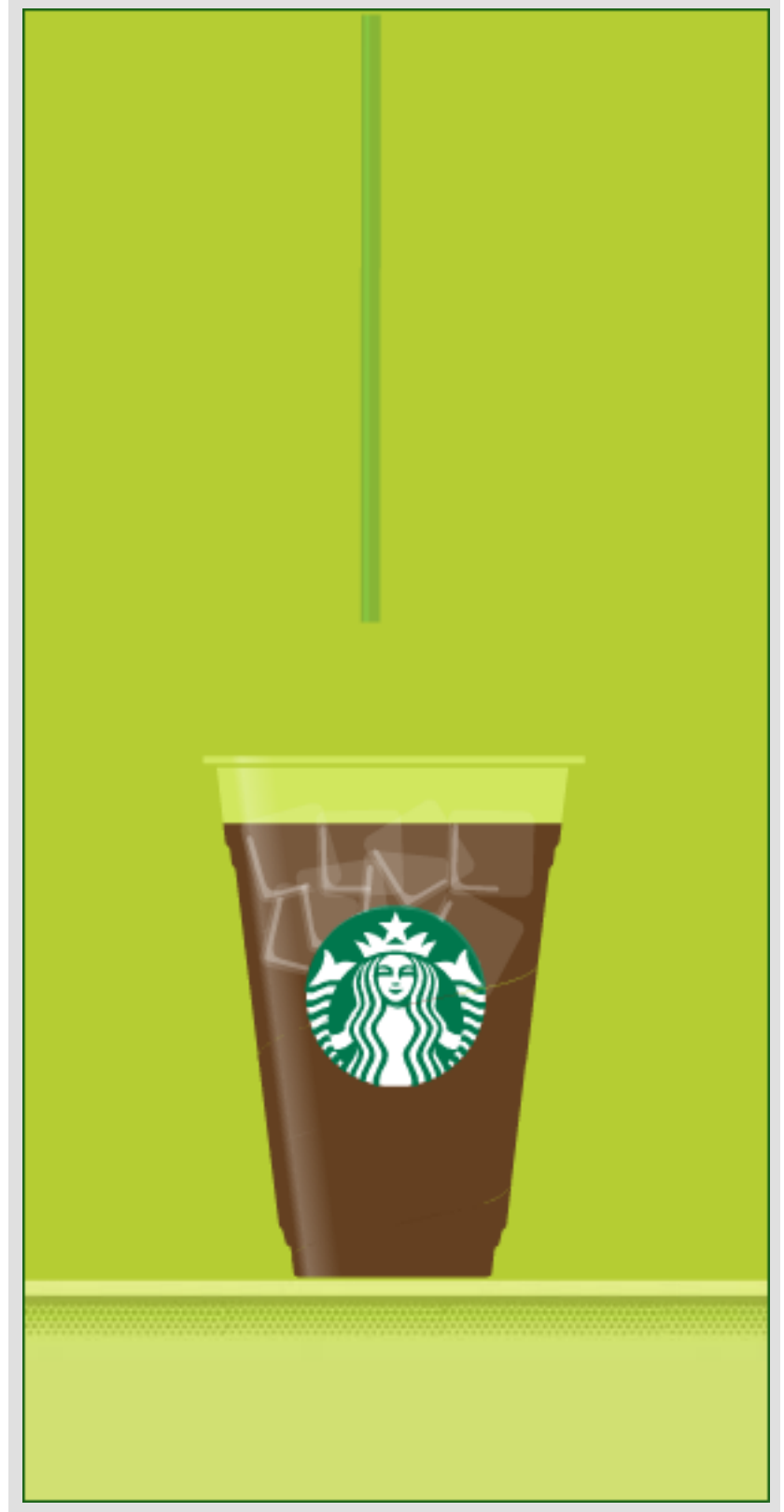
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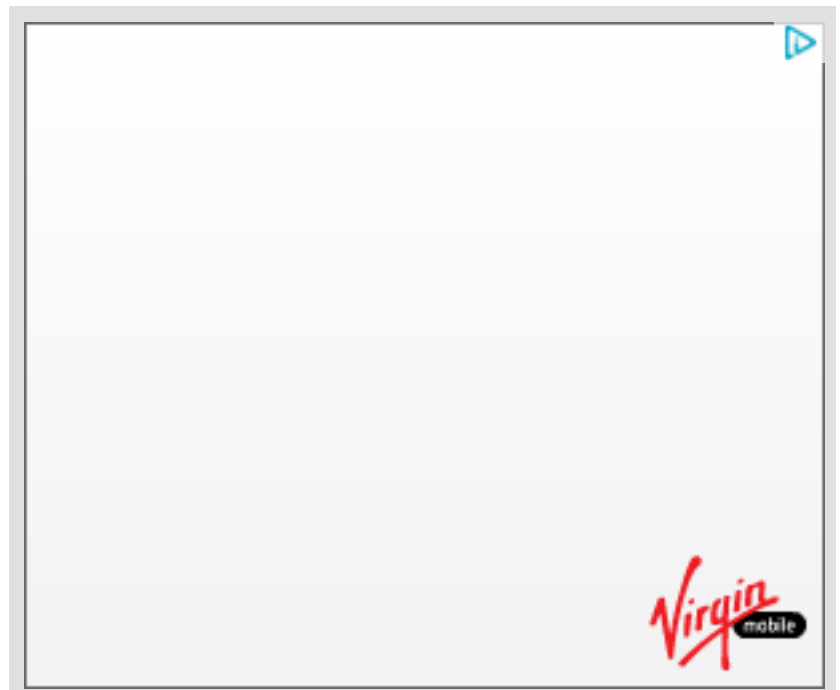
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