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Tour of the toppings...

Frozen-yogurt store dips into a new market

Nicole Blake

Sentinel Staff Writer

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Frozen-yogurt lovers: there's a new flavor on the block.

Since opening last month, the Southern California-based Cefiore has already seen its share of regulars and frequent-buyer cards, said Graham Barrett, owner of the chain's first Florida store, which is in College Park. The franchise specializes in Italian-style frozen yogurt, but also serves smoothies, snow ice and organic teas and coffees.

What to expect at Cefiore

XM satellite radio, free Wi-Fi and upscale interior designing are some of the perks Cefiore offers. The 1,200-square-foot shop has seating for 18 and is quickly becoming a hangout for area residents.

"It's different from typical ice-cream places," said Dan Cloutier while eating at Cefiore with his wife and son. "As a family, we've been here three times."

Cloutier's 8-year-old son, Seth, is a fan of the original frozen yogurt topped with kiwi, watermelon and mochi--an Asian snack made from sweet rice.

Patrons can choose from about 20 dry and fresh-fruit toppings and four base flavors of frozen yogurt--original, raspberry pomegranate, green tea and A❖ai Berry (which is native to the Amazon region).

Who's behind the counter

Owner Graham Barrett made the jump from Wall Street to the frozen-yogurt market after more than four years in institutional research sales.

The 29-year-old Rollins graduate had planned to open a Tropical Smoothie shop, but a trip to Los Angeles sparked an interest in Cefiore.

It wasn't long before he recruited Rollins graduate Josh Illig, who at the time worked as a shift supervisor for Starbucks. Barrett -- a regular at the coffee shop--approached Illig with a business plan after months of observing his work ethic.

"He's very big picture, I'm very detail-oriented," said Illig, who also works as a spinning instructor and personal trainer.

What's next

In the fall, Barrett plans to open a second location in the Winter Park or Maitland area and a third store near UCF in spring 2009--pending city approval and other factors. His vision is to reinvent Orlando's snack market using Cefiore's variety of menu options and family-friendly environment.

Although demands for the tangy treat are high these days, frozen-yogurt sales actually declined up until a year ago, said Lynda Utterback of the National Ice Cream Retailers Association -- formerly known as the National Ice Cream and Yogurt Retailers Association. Declining frozen yogurt sales prompted the organization's name change, but "it seems to be picking up in popularity again," Utterback said.

In recent years, retailers such as Pinkberry and Red Mango have also added to the frozen-yogurt trend.

Nicole Blake can be reached at 407-540-4225 or nblake@orlandosentinel.com.

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