



Aldo's Old-Fashioned Italian Water Ice

Owner: Dennis Raffa
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Business profile: We are a mom-and-pop store that makes water ice, ice cream and gelato. Everything we do here is old-world quality. We also make Italian pastries. I have the best cannoli in the tri-state area. Our chocolate mousse is lethal. I make all of our female customers sign a disclaimer before consuming the mousse (it's dangerous).

How it all began: My family owns Pop's Water Ice, which is the grand-daddy of all water ice companies. 38 years ago my uncle taught me how to make two flavors — cherry and lemon — and today we make almost 40 flavors. Our cherry water ice is the best in the tri-state area—I will put it up against anyone's.

What you do differently: It's simple — all we want to do is give our customers the best quality product possible. Everyone says that I have a champagne product in a beer neighborhood.



Number of flavors: 16 flavors of water ice daily with two specials per week; 12 flavors of ice cream; we make one flavor of gelato once a week, on Sunday.

Most popular flavors: Ice: cherry, bar none. Ice cream: pumpkin — we have to keep making it all year, customers love it so much. Once I made a caramelized popcorn gelato, and it flew out of here.

Favorite flavor to eat: Cherry ice and Vanilla ice cream.



Favorite flavor to serve: We make something called a Radio Ball. It's a cherry ice center, surrounded by hard vanilla ice cream. Not sure why it's called that, but it's unique to this section of the city.

How often do you change flavors? Once a week.

How much ice cream do you eat per week? Too much.

Signature products: Water ice is our biggest seller; it's 50 percent of our business,



and Cherry is 50 percent of our water ice business.

Service: We do old-fashioned window service.

Best compliment so far: Every time a new customer comes in and tastes our product, they roll their eyes back and say 'Oh my God.' For years I've been trying to get a woman to say 'Oh my God', and it's happened because of my desserts.

Best part of the business? Seeing the children's faces. Every night I sit outside of my store, and one of the things I look forward to the most in the summer is to see how the children have grown over the winter. Kids know what they want. I had a mother stop here — she had wanted to take her kids somewhere closer, but they wanted to come here. Kids are smart — they knew what they wanted, and these are two- or three-year-olds.

If you weren't making ice cream, what would you be doing? I would love to be able to further my pastry education.

Frozen dessert philosophy: Use the best ingredients available. It doesn't pay to try and cut costs and compromise flavor. Your customers will tell you by not coming back.

What's next: Expand the pastry business. I want to open a small gelato shop and serve gourmet Italian pastries.

