

**COLD COMFORT**  
Gelato is experiencing a flavourful upswing in quality, led by exponents such as Bondi's Pompei.

## The ice age

*Enjoy a cool change as quality gelateria chains sweep the nation.*

Everyone loves an ice-cream on a hot summer day and, as our palates have become ever more sophisticated, we've worked our way from Paddle Pops through choc-tops and Nörge-Vaaz to the latest passion: gelato. If you don't happen to be an Italian-Australian, chances are you were introduced to gelato as an after-dinner treat in the local pizzerias and Italian restaurants of your childhood. Little spiral-bound, coloured menus in suburban trattoria revealed lemon, rockmelon or orange gelato, served in the fruit's own shell, creamy cassata and sophisticated tartufo. Rock-hard, they'd probably been kept in the deep-freeze for years,

but they were the beginning of our chilled culinary education. Now, gelateria chains are springing up all over the country, cafes are making and selling their own gelato from ready-made bases, and it seems Australia is undergoing a gelato revolution, running parallel (and often under the same roof) with the recent surge of interest in true Italian-style pizza. Along with this commercial upswing, there are more and more artisanal *gelataia* (gelato makers) making fresh gelato daily from quality, seasonal ingredients.

Gelato is simply the Italian word for 'ice-cream' (and the term today is generally taken to include sorbets),

though the genuine Italian product contains less milk fat than other ice-cream. The other key difference is the amount of air pumped into the mixture during churning (called 'overrun'); gelato has about 25 per cent, whereas ice-cream can have 80 to 120 per cent. Less fat and less air means gelato is denser, has a more intense flavour and isn't so potentially cloying. Whereas good ice-cream is a matter of lightness and creaminess, good gelato relies on the pure flavour of its ingredients.

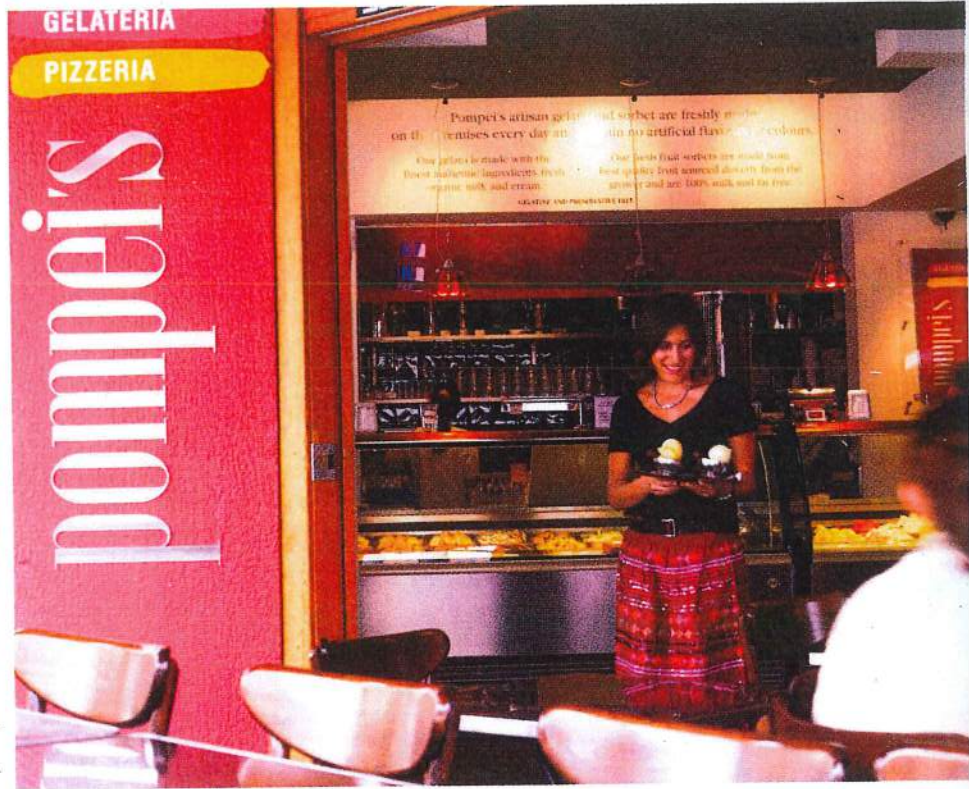
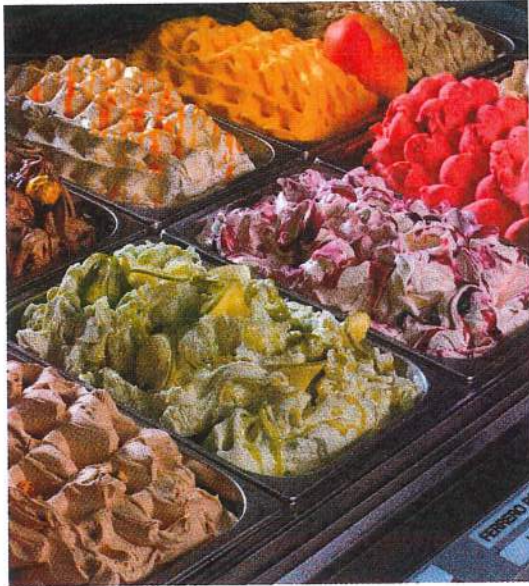
"You should be able to clearly taste the predominant flavour with a smooth texture," says George Pompei of leading Sydney gelateria Pompei's, at Bondi. "It shouldn't be fatty, powdery, sticky or icy, and it shouldn't be too sweet." The test of a good *gelataio*, Pompei says, is in the quality of its *fior di latte* (fresh milk and cream) or *crema* (slightly richer, this is made with egg yolks and flavoured with vanilla). These are the two relatively neutral gelato bases to which other ingredients are added to make the colourful array of gelati seen in most gelaterias. A fresh fruit sorbet is another acid test - this will demonstrate the gelato-maker's skill in handling ripe seasonal fruit.

And what of the friction between traditional gelati flavours and more contemporary interlopers? Pompei feels that while there's always room for experimentation, anything called gelato should stay true to its Italian heritage. The relatively new tiramisu gelato, made with egg yolks, espresso-dunked sponge, mascarpone and good-quality cocoa, gets the thumbs up, while the likes of bubblegum or apple-pie gelati have no place in his freezer display. "Most importantly," he says, "the gelato cabinet should reflect the seasons, and only the best ingredients should be used, including ripe, seasonal fruit, fresh whole milk and cream, quality chocolate and 100-per-cent nut pastes."



## ROLL ON SUMMER

Below: Tutto Bene's moreish gelati at Melbourne's Southgate. Right: Pompei's fruit-based gelati made from fresh seasonal produce is well worth the wait.



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### WHERE TO GET GREAT GELATI

#### 1 POMPEI'S GELATERIA & PIZZERIA

George Pompei is the king of gelato in Sydney, making his gelato fresh daily from quality milk, cream and eggs and celebrating seasonal flavours such as summer's wonderful figs, peaches, nectarines and mangoes. His white nectarine gelato is worth waiting all year for. 126 Roscoe Street, Bondi Beach, NSW, (02) 9365 1233.

#### 2 DOLCISSIMO

Deep in the heart of Sydney's Little Italy, Dolcissimo is always packed, inside and out. Its roasted almond gelato is light and creamy and has a great crunch from the roasted almond pieces scattered across the top. Fruit flavours shine in summer, especially tangy passionfruit, the near-fluorescent watermelon and a creamy rockmelon. 96-98 Ramsay Street, Haberfield, NSW, (02) 9716 4444.

#### 3 DOLCE LATTE IL GELATO

This suburban coffee shop makes gelato fresh daily, including some interesting flavours such as macadamia and ginger, limoncello, and meringue, but in summer the fresh fruit sorbets rule, especially the smooth, tangy strawberry. 93 Majors Bay Road, Concord, NSW, (02) 9743 0359.

#### 4 GELATERIA CAFFE 2000

A cosy cafe on foodie Darling Street, serving a small, traditional range of

gelati: fior de latte, chocolate, coffee, lemon, passionfruit, pistachio, hazelnut and a few seasonal specials such as *mela* (apple) in winter and boysenberry swirled through vanilla in summer. 650 Darling Street, Rozelle, NSW, (02) 9555 6032.

#### 5 7 APPLES GELATO

Blood orange is one of the great flavours here – but it's only seasonal (so hang out for winter, when pink grapefruit is another must). Tiramisu is a year-round winner, as is the chocolate and hazelnut combination of Ferrero Rocher. Summer brings carrot and peach, mango and other fresh fruit sorbets. 75 Acland Street, St Kilda, Vic, (03) 9537 3633.

#### 6 CASA DEL GELATO

The Pace family has been making gelato in Lygon Street for 25 years using natural ingredients and making fresh fruit gelato from pureed seasonal fruit without any dairy products. Watermelon, raspberry and boysenberry are summer favourites; for something creamy try the unusual ricotta gelato. 163 Lygon Street, Carlton, Vic, (03) 9347 0220.

#### 7 TUTTO BENE

Simon Humble (ex Scusami) has turned his hand to gelato-making at the newly opened Tutto Bene, with panoramic city views. Refreshing limoncello is a summer favourite, as is a sorbet made from bush strawberries supplied by a boutique producer in western Victoria. Shop M28, Mid-level, Southgate, Vic, (03) 9696 3334.

#### 8 RE DEL GELATO

Flavio Perissinotto learnt the art of gelato-making in Venice before coming to Australia and opening Re del Gelato (King of Gelato). His range of more than 20 flavours varies with the seasons, but all are made from fresh produce and no pre-mixes, artificial colours or flavours. Bananas, mangoes and other tropical Queensland fruits are popular summer flavours, and the oh-so-smooth lemon is a perennial favourite. 3/706 Brunswick Street, New Farm, Qld, (07) 3358 2177.

#### 9 CIBO GELATERIA TOMMY

It was in his hometown of Sicily that Tommy Nunnari perfected his gelato skills, then brought them to Adelaide 11 years ago. The gelateria carries all 24 flavours, and Cibo restaurants carry a smaller range. Nunnari mostly stays true to his Italian heritage with flavours, but makes some modern concessions with a tangy yoghurt and forest berries and an unusual licorice. 210 The Parade, Norwood, SA, (08) 8364 4488.

#### 10 IL GELATO

With three branches, 24 flavours and open until at least midnight every night, Il Gelato has Perth's gelato scene stitched up. Mascarpone and pinenut, white chocolate with profiterole, and a range of decadent chocolate varieties sit beside traditional summer favourites of lemon, strawberry and passionfruit. 81 Rokeby Rd, Subiaco, WA, (08) 9382 2600. \*