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Sweet Curls Reinvents Santa Cruz Ice Cream

By [Santacruz.com Staff](#) • July 25, 2019

Ice cream has long been this area's No. 1 dessert fixation. From the old-school scoops and sundaes at Marianne's to Penny Ice Creamery's more modern and unusual flavors that make the most of local produce, there is a destination for every type of sweet tooth.

Now, Santa Cruz has a new type of ice cream to obsess over: rolled. Originally from Thailand, rolled ice cream is literally curls of freshly made, flavored ice cream—scraped fresh for each individual customer off a frozen metal plate.

“The whole process of making rolled ice cream here is entertaining. From start to finish, there is something to watch. It's a show,” Sweet Curls co-owner John Tran says. “We weren't happy with the idea of a place where you just scooped ice cream out of a pre-made bucket. That seemed like something you could do at home.”

When Tran and his wife Elena Perepech first tried rolled ice cream, they loved it. “It was my ice cream, made fresh just for me,” Tran says. “You don’t get that with other places.”

The couple decided to open their own rolled ice cream shop, one that was fun and relaxing for all ages. Their vision was finally realized when they opened Sweet Curls in downtown Santa Cruz in April.

The owners say that the flavors took a long time to create. They taught themselves how to make rolled ice cream and routinely experimented at home, picking and choosing seasonal flavors. Some of their current flavors include piña colada, strawberry shortcake and kona coffee.

“We liked the idea of making ice cream as fresh as possible. Even if you make ice cream the same day, it’s still sitting around in the freezer,” Tran says. “This way, the toppings and ice cream are not only super fresh, but the process is more collaborative with customers because they can tweak flavors to their liking and also watch the entire process.”

The business is a franchise, and though the owners are focused on their Santa Cruz location for now, they hope to expand the business to Los Angeles and Hawaii. “We want to give people this experience—a fun atmosphere and fresh ice cream, wherever they are,” Perepech says.

Tran adds that the goal is to give customers a “mini-vacation,” he says. “We want to invoke and share the things we love with other people.”

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