



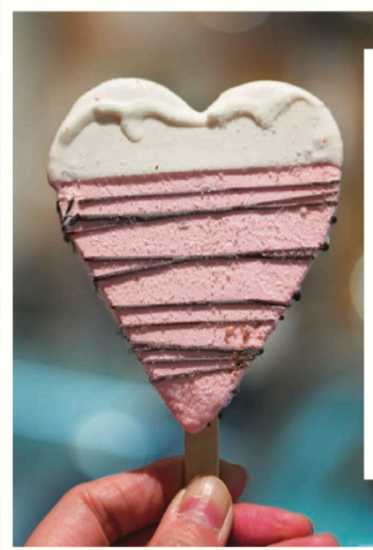
I Scream, You Scream, We All Scream For... Gelato?

BY CHRISTINE CHRISTOPOUL

Life in Franklin Lakes got a little bit sweeter when Gio's Gelato & Espresso bar opened earlier this year. Although many of his customers come into the store with a big, "Hi, Gio!", the owner's name is actually Raffaele D'Angelo (Ralph). Ralph was born in Palermo, Sicily and his family moved to America in 1973 when he was 10 years old. He worked in the Information Technology field for 33 years before deciding to make a career change. One day he was chatting with his friend, Calogero, and reminiscing about the delicious gelato he used to eat in Italy. Ralph mentioned he still enjoyed a bowl of gelato almost every

night, but it just isn't the same quality as he used to get with his father when they lived in Sicily. Calogero told Ralph to just go make it himself. He might have been teasing, but the seed was planted and Ralph decided that opening a gelato store in NJ would be his next act. But where to begin? Since the best gelato he ever tasted was in Italy, Ralph traveled to Rimini to attend the International School of Gelato (yes, that is a real thing) and then shadowed a friend in Sicily at his gelateria where he also received Barista training.

When he felt he had mastered his craft, Ralph came back to Bergen County and started planning. He was



Gio's is offering special gelato cakes and pops for Valentine's Day this month

thrilled to find the Franklin Lakes storefront as he loved the location and ease of parking. He signed a lease, created a business plan and ordered his equipment. All that remained was to choose a name. One of his grandkids suggested it should be something short, catchy and easy for kids to remember. Ralph explains, "I was very close to my father, Giovanni, so I immediately thought of honoring him by calling it Gio's." Gio's is truly a family environment as Ralph runs the business with help from his many nieces, nephews and step-kids and one of his favorite things is that his own family really gets to know the local families who come into the store. He finds his customers to be very friendly and says, "The atmosphere reminds him of the gelaterias in Italy where customers stop in to relax, have a cup of coffee and chat."

In case you are wondering, there are several differences between gelato and ice cream. Ralph explains, "Gelato has more milk (rather than cream) and less sugar than ice cream; therefore, it is both softer and healthier than ice cream." Ralph makes many traditional flavors (vanilla, chocolate, strawberry and lemon, to name a few) as well as more exotic ones such as stracciatella, gianduja and the very popular unicorn (it's what your kids will inevitably choose). He also adds weekly specialty flavors and creates delicious

(I promise), custom gelato cakes. Looking for a unique Valentine's gift or date spot? This year Gio's will be offering special heart shaped gelato pops and cakes. I'll take that over a box of candy any day.

In addition to gelato, Gio's also sells specialty items such as Italian cookies and pastries, macarons, Nutella tarts and other seasonal products. And don't forget the coffee. Gio's Baristas make freshly brewed coffees, lattes, cappuccinos and espressos to enjoy in-store or to take on the go.

This Spring Ralph is adding a new feature to Gio's repertoire. He has purchased a Sicilian Carrettino which is a mobile cart that can be used at your location for parties and events. Gio's staff will pack up four flavors of your choosing, cups, spoons and the personnel to bring the gelato to you! Ralph is excited at the prospect of continuing to add new products and is looking ahead to adding crepes and waffles to his ever-expanding menu. Ralph says, "Sometimes you don't know where the road will take you, I never thought I would be making gelato, but sometimes life takes you down another path." We sure are glad the path took him to Franklin Lakes.

During the entire month of February, bring in this article to get 10% off your in-store purchase. For more information visit Gio's website at www.giosgelatonj.com.

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