



(ABOVE) MAITE MORAZA: Each Gelatissimo store has a gelato machine to make it as fresh as one wants.



RED BULL gelato is a sweet perk-upper at Gelatissimo.



AFFOGATO: A play on hot espresso and cool gelato with nuts.

BO'S COFFEE

Entrepreneur Steve D. Benitez spent his last day in America sipping cappuccino al fresco while savoring the view of Orange County. After traveling across the globe in the early '90s, enjoying espressos and lattés in outdoor cafés, he wished that he could replicate this experience in the Philippines.

He then took up seminars and conferences of coffees in the next two years. When he returned to Cebu, he conducted a market study which revealed that a coffee shop would not succeed since Filipinos associated coffee drinking with cold weather.

While traveling in Singapore, he observed that coffee shops were sprouting. Since the Lion City's weather was as humid as the Philippines, Benitez followed his instincts. He opened Bo's Coffee in 1996—a year before foreign coffee chains invaded the Philippines—at Ayala Center Cebu.

The name was derived from an exhibitor at a coffee conference who educated him on the nuances of coffee. Initially, he had to give away free coffee to educate customers that coffee wasn't just a commodity but a lifestyle.

Bo's Coffee's beans are largely sourced locally and the flavor is more arabica. Selected outlets offer the exotic civet coffee.

"Our advocacy is just roasted coffee beans," says Benitez.

Bo's Coffee also introduced the Froccino Oreo—frozen cappuccino blended with Oreo cookies, and the Froccino, with blended beans that give a bittersweet crunch. Connoisseurs love the espresso, which is known for its freshness. Benitez's favorite is the cappuccino. "It's strong and bold with more froth and steamed milk, topped with chocolate powder," he says.

Today, with 38 outlets, Bo's Coffee has developed a strong following. Benitez is flattered yet saddened when people ask him if the coffee shop is a foreign brand.

"We think that if it looks good, then it must be foreign. Why can't we say, if it's good, then it's local?"

THE GUSTAVIAN

Named after the kings of Sweden, Gustavian has references to the northern European lifestyle, what with its dainty open-

GELATISSIMO

When restaurateur Maite Cristina Moraza and her partner, Leigh Parker, a Filipino-Australian, decided to open Gelatissimo, Australian-based gelato company, the principals asked themselves, why in Cebu and not in Metro Manila?



Moraza hails from the Aboitiz family, one of the oldest families in Cebu. Parker was also raised there. Upon visiting Ayala Center Cebu, the principals appreciated its laidback ambiance. People were more likely to buy gelato, rain or shine, in that milieu. And the market, in general,

was drawn to the mall. Since the first Philippine franchise opened last year, customers have been coming back.

Unlike other gelato brands where the product is prepared in the commissary and the texture gets affected by the handling and transport to the outlet, at Gelatissimo, Moraza treats the gelato like a living organism. It is reconstituted daily at the store to retain the fresh taste and fluffy texture.

"There's no wastage. The gelato is always creamy and never flat," says Moraza.

The flavors are also unique to the brand, such as forest berry, Red Bull—popular with students and Koreans, Creme Caramel, rock melon, caramelized fig, piña colada. If you love chocolate, get a load of Veronese chocolate or the chocolate truffle.

There are seasonal flavors such as 16 varieties of cheesecake gelatos and the Pavlova promotion, inspired by the famous Australian meringue with whipped cream and fruit, named after a ballerina. Plans are afoot to include ube as part of its international flavors menu.

Gelatissimo also serves its trademark *affogato*, a scoop of gelato soaked in espresso and sprinkled with nuts. For the adventurous, there's the *Copa Bambina*, a large dish filled with a variety of scoops.

True to the Cebuanos' value-for-money mentality, the price is only P95 for a 110-gm. scoop, compared with Manila's P100 for 100 gms. At night, there are lots of customers basking in the simple pleasure of sitting on the rim of The Terraces' garden while licking their sorbets and gelatos.