



The Journal



Cost of living: Cut in number of ice cream flavors

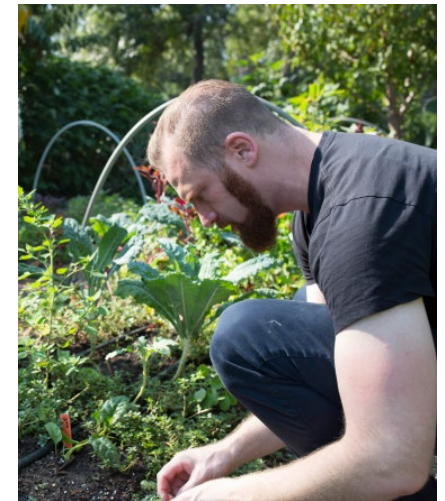


Emmer & Rye Opens a Texas Mega-Market With Four New Restaurants in San Antonio

Austin TX, Mmay 2d, 2024. Emmer & Rye is a restaurant designed around the farmer’s haul, featuring a menu that changes daily with a focus on seasonal and local cuisine. Heirloom grains are milled fresh for house made pastas, breads, and desserts, whole animal butchery is done on site, and an extensive in-house fermentation program captures flavors at their peak and preserves them for the off season. Emmer & Rye works with Zero FoodPrint to be a carbon neutral restaurant.

On a late-summer Wednesday morning, the Texas heat has yet to settle over Austin’s HausBar Urban Farm. Amidst the tangled growths of passion fruit vines, amaranth and purslane, chef Kevin Fink stops to sample a sprig of a cilantro-like Mexican herb called papalo. Nearby, a pair of donkeys loiter while the low hum of a passing city bus is pierced by a rooster’s crow.

When Fink stops by the two-acre HausBar farm in the sleepy east-side Govalle neighborhood, he always has owner and farmer Dorsey Barger guide him through the crops. Today is no different. Sporting a low-key urban style complemented by an undercut, the 33-year-old strolls between vegetable beds and herb planters. By the end of his visit, he has honed in on a slew of plants which Barger’s staff will soon harvest and deliver three miles away to his downtown restaurant, Emmer & Rye. That night, the delicate flora make appearances in dishes across the menu, from pineapple mint and fennel blossoms in the crab and cucumber dish to heart-shaped hoja santa in the Mangalitsa trotter plate.



Chef Kevin Fink’s hand pick ingredient

Emmer & Rye opened in November of 2015 at the south end of the Rainey Street Historic District, adjacent to a pair of shady old pecan trees. The menu focuses on a balance of vegetable-forward and more protein-heavy small plates that can be mixed and matched along with specials that arrive via dim-sum-style carts throughout the meal. The cuisine is obsessive American farm-to-table: Pastas, breads and tortillas are not just made fresh, but with heritage grains sourced from the south and ground into flour on a countertop Italian mill.

Fink explains that emmer (also known as farro) was one of the first cultivated varieties of wild wheat and a key ingredient in allowing humans to stop being foraging nomads and start building permanent, agriculture-based communities.

“It is in many ways a throwback to the relationship between mankind and food, and how our ability to steer it and cook it and craft it has allowed our species to be the dominant species on Earth,” Fink says. “And yet, I think it's something that, in many ways, we don't actually respect.”



Oscartek's Muro best suited for fresh greenery

Before Fink, who started his career in his Tucson hometown as a dishwasher, became known as one of the hottest chefs in Austin, some locals knew him better as their Uber driver. In the early days, when money was tight, he and his wife Alicynn, both worked second jobs. But just when things seemed most dire, somehow, they'd pull through and pay their vendors and staff, whether it be by selling his car or an utterly charming and unexpected windfall — like when a loyal customer purchased \$5,000 worth of the restaurant's gift cards.

Fink fine-tuned his craft in restaurants around the world: Napa Valley, Copenhagen, Italy. His partners did so as well: Chef de cuisine Page Pressley spent time in kitchens around Santa Fe, Houston and Philadelphia while Guyana-born pastry chef Tavel Bristol-Joseph worked in New York City. The trio make up an A-team of culinary collaborators manifesting a kitchen environment that is equal parts mission, hard work and fun.

Diners can clearly witness the calm intensity in the open kitchen, and even at the height of service, there is no yelling. Instead, says Alicynn, “there's a lot of stern faces — a lot of good dad looks.... In restaurants you give so much of your heart to this place, and it's taking time away from your loved ones. You have to have fun. Otherwise it's just not worth it.”

In the afternoon, while huddling with staff to discuss menu changes, a lone cricket is discovered perching in the air-conditioned dining room. Fink gently scoops it up and leaves it outside under the midday sun. It is this affinity for nature that defines the chef, who makes it a point to create his menus based on what the farms have to offer: “What the season gives us is what we use.” This means he and his staff are constantly pivoting to those whims — and mastering the chaos. “There are intimate aspects of each plant and farm that we learn together,” he says. “And there's a lot of failure in what we do. Luckily, that failure doesn't make it out,” adds Fink, who tends toward Nordic or Northern Italian flavors during the cold or Asian or Mexican when it's hot.

Licynn moved to Austin and began building out the space, they heard about Barger, who started the farm nine years ago with her wife Susan Hausmann, and went to HausBar to learn more. The connection was immediate.

“Our passions really align,” says Barger, who cuts off orders daily at 9 a.m. and only then harvests what her clients want for their afternoon deliveries. “I am just a freak for doing it the right way. I don't want to use a tiller; I want to use a pitchfork. I don't want to use stuff that the old people wouldn't have used, and I think that's the same way with Emmer & Rye. [They are] such fanatic about doing only the best, the freshest, the most vibrant, they order from us every day. And nobody else does that.” Aside from the handful of East Austin farms within blocks of HausBar, Fink sources mainly from Texan purveyors within a 100-mile radius. And he never buys spices — just about everything is made from scratch. A larder with windowed-doors holds an array of house-fermented chilies, vinegars, even a liqueur concocted from unripe green pecans gathered out front.

“If you go to the grocery store and you pick something up from the refrigerator case, it's just not going to taste like a freshly picked never-been-refrigerated bunch of basil,” says Barger. “They really are doing something unique and special and wonderful, but I think that — and this is my greatest hope — that the Austin restaurant evolution is going to be riding their wave. They didn't create the wave, they pushed it to new heights. And there are going to be people in their wake for sure.”



Oscartek High humidity cases best suited for red meat and aging

Cost of living: Cut in number of ice cream flavors

20 May 2023, By Elen Davies,
BBC Wales news
Ice cream BBC

There is a danger of more bespoke flavours going off the market due to the cost-of-living crisis ice cream makers say Fewer ice cream flavours will be available this year after an increase in ingredient and production costs, producers have said. Ice cream makers said they were reducing the variety they offer to save money and ensure sales. With less creativity in production, customers could be left to choose from more traditional flavours only.

The UK government said it would continue to help people and businesses through "difficult times". Having thrived in west Wales since the 1930s, the Conti family have been known for their ice cream for decades. Their recipe is secret and Tom Lewis, a member of the family, is now responsible for producing it. Comparing the current production method with his Grandad's generation, he said the process has become "much easier" but the current economic climate was "much more difficult".

Tom Lewis from Conti's is no longer serving the same variety of flavours "I've swapped from organic milk to local milk and my price is still about 50% more than it was two years ago," he said.

"I have some ingredients that are up 100%, sugar [is up] 50%. So, just on price alone, I guess there hasn't been a jump like this ever." As a way of overcoming the recent cost increases from ingredients to electricity, Tom has started to cut back on flavours - a tough decision having been the one who introduced flavours to his Grandad's plain recipe in the first place.

"I'm keeping stock of certain things lower because I can't risk having them going out of date by winter," he said. "I know honeycomb's doubled in price, so I haven't made any of that this year."

Known for their hand-crafted quality ice cream, one company from north Wales is also worried about sales going cold due to rising production costs. Helen Holland from Môn ar Lwy, based in Bodorgan, Anglesey, said the business has made several cutbacks over recent years.

"We need to make the most we can when we're in production," she said. "We've also decreased our flavours. We still have bespoke and about 25 to 30 different flavours on offer every season, but I'm not as creative as I used to be." Reacting to the possibility of losing their favourite flavoured ice cream, many in the seaside town of Aberaeron, Ceredigion, were disappointed.

Eating her Kinder Bueno flavoured ice cream, Emily Leonard, from Manchester, said: "I'd be a bit gutted to be honest, if all the boring ones were left...you never know what you're going to pick until you look at all the flavours." "I feel like the cooler flavours get more attention."

Ian Roberts is worried about what a lack of flavours might mean for the summer and said his kids enjoyed a variety of flavours.

He said: "If there's less flavours, there'd be a little less fun for the summer wouldn't there?" A fan of vanilla ice cream, Jane Guest, from Aberystwyth, suggested ice cream makers should raise their prices depending on the flavour. "I don't know why they don't sell it at a higher price," she said. "If it's something like nuts, pistachio and hazelnut, that does cost more." But she did acknowledge ice cream was already "quite expensive". Things need to change if the industry is to survive, Tom from Conti's says Mr Lewis said he did not think businesses should "dump" large premiums on customers and said things would need to change "drastically" for the industry to succeed.

"People need to get back on their feet. Ice cream is a treat, if people are unable to pay their utility fees, they're not going to be buying ice cream," he said. The UK government said: "We were clear that we would help people and businesses in Wales through these difficult times and we continue to do so. "We are taking action to reduce inflation while making sure real-time financial support is provided to those who need it, with more than 400,000 people in Wales receiving £301 directly from the UK government in the last few weeks."

