



Pancakes and Ice Cream

Author : Mike Smith

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We spent a couple of days at Wrightsville Beach recently, and I feel compelled to share two of my favorite North Carolina food places. These are not to be missed if you are anywhere in the vicinity.



Dave Monaghan

The first is the [Causeway Café](#) just over the drawbridge before you get to the beach. It is a classic



breakfast place with loads of local color. We have been regular customers for over 20 years and many of the same staff members have worked there the entire time. We also always recognize other customers who we have seen since the beginning. The owner, Dave Monagan, is a real character. It can be busy on the weekends and there almost always is a line. There is a comfortable porch with tables and chairs, and free self-serve coffee while you wait. It is very pleasant to sit on the porch and read the newspaper until your table is ready. When your name rises to the top of the list, Dave comes out onto the porch and screams your last name at the top of his lungs. You can always tell the first-time customers because they jump every time he calls out a name. He actually is a very nice guy.

The food is terrific. My standard order is two blueberry pancakes with a side order of sausage. The pancakes are fabulous, and they are large. There was a family in the booth behind us recently and one of the sons (maybe eight years old) ordered a full stack of three pancakes. When they arrived, his mother declared "that is a freaky amount of pancakes." True enough. The link sausage is fabulous—good flavor and a good sized, thick link, as opposed to the scrawny little links you get some places. The waffles are one of their most popular items with a crazy number of different toppings—my favorite is the butterscotch waffle. All of their portions are generous. Robin often gets a half order of Eggs Benedict, and it always makes me wonder how anyone could possibly eat an entire order. Omelets, biscuits, grits, and everything else is so good.



You can also get lunch there, and it is worth it. I had a shrimp burger on this last trip that was the best I've ever eaten. Good vegetable plates and always some kind of cobbler or banana pudding. What's not to like? I've been known to have breakfast and lunch there on the same day, and I'd go for the trifecta if only they were open for dinner.

The second place is [Boombalatti's homemade ice cream](#) on Military Cutoff Road near the Mayfair Shopping Center. Oh my goodness. You will never find better ice cream. We have been going there for nearly 20 years too, and have followed them to three different locations. The ice cream is rich without being overly sweet, and I've never detected a hint of artificial flavor. The prices are



incredibly reasonable. Our overall favorite is the coconut ice cream, but it has new competition from the salted caramel peanut ice cream. They have a great four-flavor sampler that eliminates the need to make otherwise painful choices.



I've been known to stop by Boombalatti's after meetings in Wilmington and get a quart to take home. I have a cooler in the back of my car just for ice cream (and for good local barbecue). The safest option for keeping the ice cream cold on the long drive home is to get a small piece of dry ice from the Harris Teeter across the street.

We had a late dinner reservation last Saturday night and I was worried that we wouldn't make it to Boombalatti's before they closed. I went early and got a quart of coconut ice cream and then bought a jar of fudge sauce from the grocery store. After dinner I put the fudge sauce in the microwave for 30 seconds and then made hot fudge sundaes with coconut ice cream. A great dessert, and I'm embarrassed to admit how much of the quart I polished off.

Some of the online reviews for Boombalatti's complain that the owner is rude and that the service is poor. That has never been my experience. I like him a lot, and maybe it is because we have gotten to know him over the years. He is an intense, hard-working, and reserved guy, and he's not big on small talk. He gave me the idea for the dry ice because he was concerned that regular ice wouldn't keep the ice cream cold enough. So go for the ice cream and everything will be alright.



The Causeway Café and Boombalatti's are two homegrown treasures. In my quest to highlight good food across North Carolina, I encourage you to visit these places if you haven't already tried them. Please share your favorites.