

# Water ice still hot summer treat

## It takes on an ethnic twist in Ocean City

By **BETT NORCROSS McCOY**  
Staff Writer

**OCEAN CITY** — Tom Curyto Jr. grabs a 5-gallon bucket, heads to a back room and says, "You can watch when I mix it, but wait there while I put in the ingredients."

Geez. It's water ice. A summertime tradition. What's the big secret?

A minute or so passes. Curyto comes back with the bucket nearly half filled with some peach-colored something and some white something and some something else.

What is all that?

"Well, there's sugar in it," is all he'll say as he tops the bucket off with water, mixes it, then lugs the bucket to a big freezer unit to chill it with some other flavors in waiting — grape, banana, cherry.

"The water ice business is a tough business. You have some strong companies out there," Curyto said.

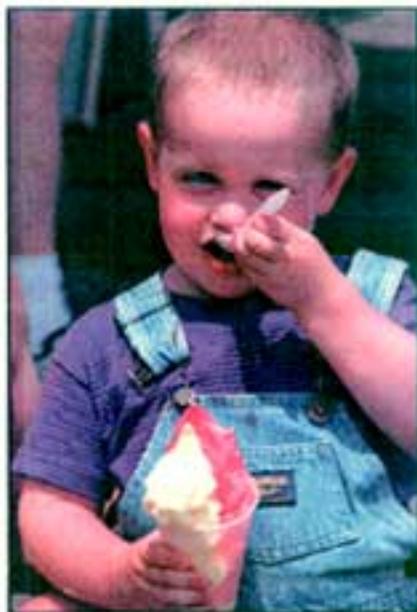
That's why he's so protective of his father's recipe for TLC's Polish Water Ice.

No joke. Polish water ice. Not Italian water ice and not snowballs or snow cones or shave ice or whatever.

The Curytos — Tom Sr., Lynne, Tom Jr., Corey, Todd and Tara — of West Chester, Pa., have a patent in the works for their water ice and are even talking TLC's fran-

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Press photo by John Jablonowski

**Justin Hanus, 2, partakes in a summertime tradition on a hot sticky day recently in Ocean City.**

## Treat

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chises.

(TLC isn't for Tender Loving Care. It is for Tom Lynne Curyto.)

The Polish part reflects Tom Sr.'s family heritage.

"It is not your typical Italian water ice," says a TLC's handout.

"Although they are good, Polish water ice is made different. ... The inventor, who comes from a Polish background, has a degree in Aeronautical and Astronautical Engineering," the handout says, "and has always wanted to invent a product that is 'out of this world.'"

OK, but why water ice?

Tom Sr., reached by phone at the family's new Wildwood location, said his love of Italian water ice led him to create a homemade version. His product turned out creamy and smooth, and a business was born.

"It's hot. Cool off with a free sample of water ice," Dave Thomas calls out to passers-by on this stifling day.

"Free samples, folks. Polish water ice," co-worker Gerard "Ger" Ehmann says, as he fills more tiny sample cups at the stand on the Boardwalk near 11th Street.

"Tastes like Polish sausage," Tom Ward, of Houston, said, tongue-in-cheek, of peach water ice. "You could back off on the grease," he said with a smile.

Ward, in town for the annual reunion of the Gamble family of McKeesport, Pa., said he was only kidding. "It's pretty good. ... I like Italian water ice. I like this too. I'm not ethnically biased."

Thomas and Ehmann easily recall several other verbal darts tossed at the business name: "What is it, just water and no



Staff photo by John Jablonowski

**Tom Curyto serves free samples of his popular Polish water ice to Richie Lynch of Drexel, Pa., and Christini DeJohn of Media, Pa.**

ice?" "What, do you microwave it?" "Does it take 10 guys to stir it?" "Is it in a square cup?"

Tom Sr., who works with Here's Life, Intercity, a nonprofit organization that assists churches with special programs, said he doesn't mind the jokes "as long as they are wholesome."

The Ocean City TLC's Polish Water Ice premiered last summer. This is the first season for the Wildwood location and for the TLC's in Dewey Beach, Del.

The story goes that ancient Romans made the first water ices from fruit and snow. Whether

they had franchises isn't part of recorded history.

Here are some seaside places where you can find the more traditional water ice:

- Meltdown, 12th Street and Long Beach Boulevard, Surf City;
- Mento's, 5304 Ventnor Ave. Ventnor;
- Mama's Italian Water Ice, 783 Ventnor Ave., Margate;
- Anthony's Water Ice, 96 Boardwalk, Ocean City;
- Lemon Tree, Washington Street Mall, Cape May.