

New Orleans Snoballs: A COOL Treat

By Christine Lodice

It was during the hot days of the Depression, in 1936, on Magazine and Delachaise Streets that George Ortolano was struggling to think of ways to increase his profits. He noticed a small crowd buying snow cones at a neighboring business, and he wondered how he could get those people and their money to go to his store. He could sell snow cones, but he wanted to offer something better. So he set his sights on making a better snow cone. The next summer, Ortolano introduced the SnoWizard ice shaver, and snow cones became something slightly different—snoballs.

Snoballs were first created with a limited choice of flavored syrups. Mr. “O,” as he affectionately became known, purchased many of his syrups from the Charles Dennery Company. Eventually, he developed his own flavoring concentrates.

In 1981, Mr. O’s nephew, Ronnie Sciortino, joined the SnoWizard company and began adding to the 40 flavors they then offered. Today’s SnoWizard Supplies company offers 96 concentrated flavors, and still counting: two new flavors, candy apple and egg custard, are presently in production.

According to the present-day SnoWizard, Ronnie Sciortino, the very first SnoWizard machine was sold in 1937 to George’s cousin, George Mariano, for \$75. The purchase included the machine and 12 ceramic syrup crocks. The very same machine was in operation until 1996, when it was put on permanent display at the SnoWizard factory.

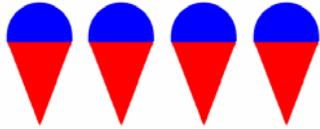
People who have never had a snoball don’t realize the difference between a snow cone and a snoball. In my vast snoball experience (I have more than you might think), the best way to describe the snoball to say, a Yankee, is to tell him or her to imagine it is snowing; then to imagine that it is snowing flavored snow, and you can scoop it into a cup and eat it. The usual response is “Eat the snow?” to which we from the land of self-indulgence quickly reply “Of course—it’s *flavored!*”

As a result of debat over what makes a snoball good, *Driftwood* is doing a summer series on snoballs—including a history lesson (there is more to the story) and serious snoball stand reviews. Our reviews will include ratings on texture of ice (it’s what makes a snoball what it is), juiciness (necessary on hot days), price range, and chocolate flavor (referring to milk chocolate or fudge taste).

So after you’ve read *Driftwood*, you can keep cool by using our reviews as a snoball reference when the heat gets to you.

Our first review, as a tribute to the late great Mr. O (he passed away in January of this year at the age of 86), is of SnoWizard Snoballs located at 4001 Magazine Street, on the corner on Magazine and Constantinople (try saying that with a mouth full of ice).

Review:



SnoWizard Snoballs

Texture: “Sno” perfect. Fluffy and melts in your mouth.

Chocolate: A true milk chocolate taste.

Price Range: From 60 cents for a “kiddie” size (6 oz.) to \$2 for a large (32 oz.).

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