

10 FABULOUS—AND QUICK—WAYS TO REV UP YOUR LIVING ROOM

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Deep Freeze

Antique ice cream artifacts reveal a time-honored story of America's favorite dessert

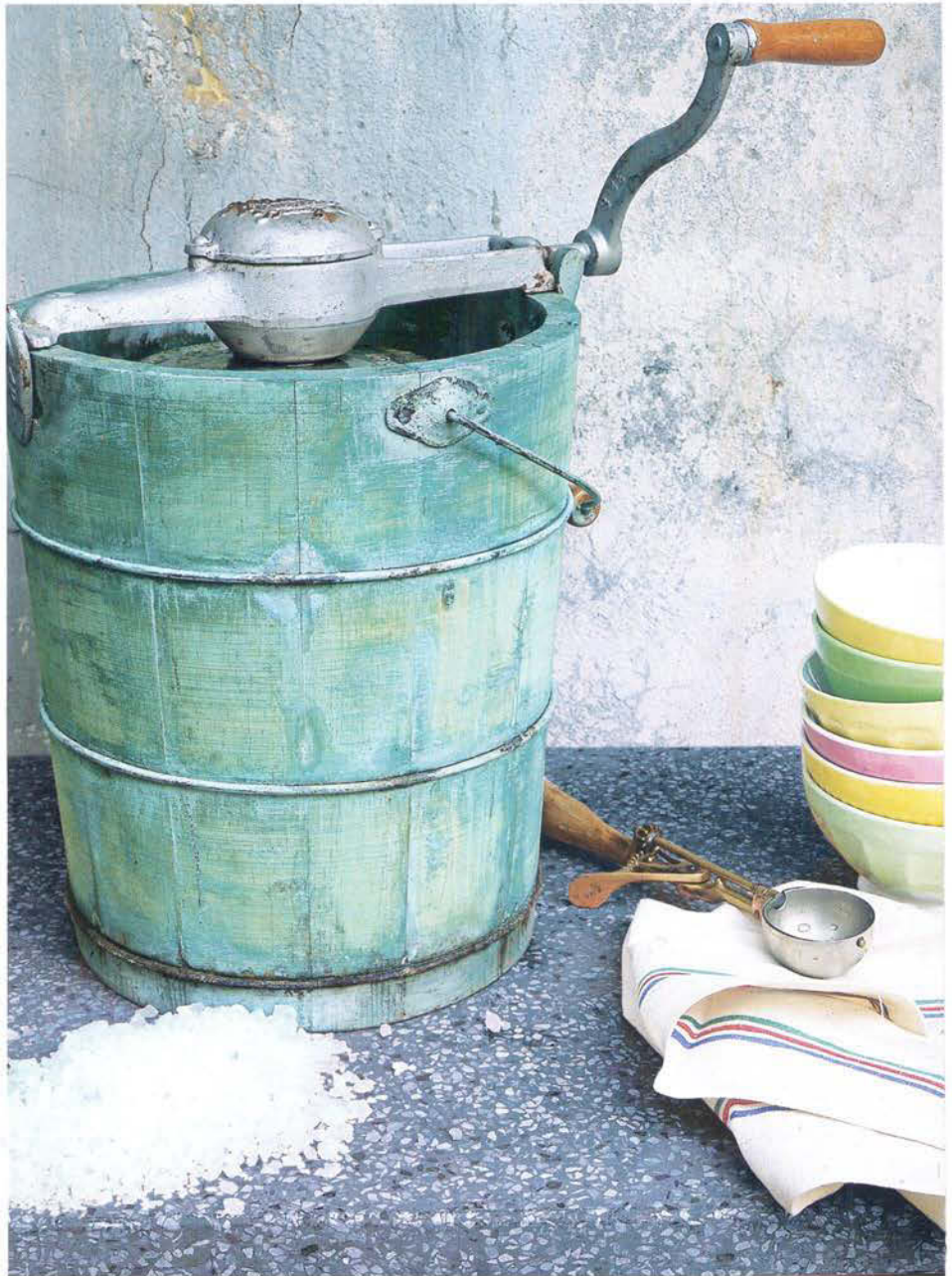
FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY, no summer holiday has been imagined without ice cream. Yet this seemingly quintessential American treat was once mainly served in winter, and has a distinctly foreign provenance.

A thousand years ago the Chinese flavored frozen cream with syrups, and later, Muslim potentates adored sherbets. The idea probably passed into Europe through Italy, where trade exposed old Roman ports to a variety of new foods. By the late 17th century, an icehouse had been built at Versailles, and a café offering ice cream opened in Paris. Within fifty years the fashion spread throughout the continent, as did equipment for making, molding, and serving ice cream.

The introduction of electrical refrigeration and mechanical ice cream makers have made for a popular dish available to all, but the artifacts of its past are both stylish and collectable.

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Shaping Up In its earlier days, ice cream was molded into a wide array of shapes, using forms like the one from 19th-century England shown at left. But making it was a laborious process—it often took more than an hour to produce two pints. Above: An early-20th-century hand-cranked American oak ice cream freezer. >



Chill Out

The technique for freezing cream remained essentially unchanged for a millennium. Metal cylinders with lids, like the 18th-century pewter versions shown above, were filled with custard and rotated in salted ice or snow. Only the addition in the 19th century of a crank to facilitate turning altered the process. From the beginning, ice cream was molded into incongruous shapes to create amusing vignettes for the table. Molds shaped like asparagus, candlesticks, cauliflower, and even fish are illustrated in the works of renowned mid-18th-century French encyclopedist Denis Diderot, and many of these forms remained popular into the 1900s. When anarchist threats terrorized society, fashionable hostesses of the late 19th century mocked anxiety with frozen confections shaped like bombs, fuses, and grenades.

Dishing It Out

Originally, ice cream was piled into tureens, then spooned into smaller vessels.

A variety of glass and cut-crystal forms were used, suggesting miniature punch cups or tapered glasses. Porcelain dessert services for grand households were often equipped with pairs of ice pails or coolers called *glacières*. These imposing vases had inner liners that could be surrounded by shaved ice or snow, and lids with deep depressions that could be similarly filled to keep the ice cream well chilled.



ICE CREAM DISH: ELLEN McDERMOTT



The technology of freezing altered the style of serving ice cream. By the late 19th century it was being sliced into shallow dishes or plates and was eaten with flat spoons or forks. Ice cream knives often resembled fish slices. Lalique-style saucers (left) are accompanied by a set of Napoleon III period silver ice cream "eaters" with matching slicer and server. Top: 18th-century pewter molds. Above: By the 20th century, ice cream was being served in scoops that were placed in cones or fancy receptacles like this 1930s frosted glass dish from Italy.