

Ice cream

Chicago's DoveBar
a favorite of Yuppies

Associated Press

CHICAGO — The DoveBar may be pricey, chic and a favorite taste-treat of trend-conscious yuppies, but it was three decades ago that Leo Stefanos started selling the chocolate-covered ice cream bar for 15 cents.

"They say it's a yuppie product," said Mike Stefanos, 33, son of the DoveBar's creator. "Why, it's 30 years old," added Stefanos, one of DoveBar International Inc.'s three board members.

Today, the bars sell for \$1.50 to \$2 each and sales are expected to reach \$10 million this fiscal year, he said.

"The ice cream is much improved and the chocolate is thicker" than when his father made the bars at Dove Candy and Ice Cream, the family's shop on Chicago's Southwest Side, Stefanos said in a recent interview.

"It's the hot item, they're my No. 1-selling ice cream bar," said Mark Halverson, manager of Doral Market in downtown Chicago. "They're very trendy."

The lavish, hand-dipped coating is the DoveBar's main attraction, say fans, who include many young urban professionals, or yuppies.

"The ice cream isn't that great, but the chocolate is superb. It's gourmet food," said food writer Brenda Rotzoll, who admits she runs out from work many afternoons to buy the bars. "There's so much chocolate you can't eat it without big gobs falling off."

Greek-born Leo Stefanos created the DoveBar to satisfy his two small sons' passion for ice cream bars, and later began offering them to custom-

ers, hand-dipping them on the spot, the younger Stefanos said.

He said his father eventually owned a string of ice cream parlors where the bars were sold. Expanded distribution began in 1980 through Chicago-area grocery chains. The product, launched nationally in 1984, now is sold in 4,000 supermarkets and specialty stores in 17 states, Stefanos said.

Daily production has jumped from 1,800 bars in 1983 to 70,000. In April, DoveBar opened a \$2 million plant with 67 employees in suburban Burr Ridge.

"It's been awesome," he said. "We've had to change gears so often — machinery, marketing, everything." Stefanos left an accounting firm and the University of Chicago's business school in 1980 to run the family business.

"But a small business can expand quickly," said Stefanos, who sits on the board of directors with company president Louis Yasen and Richard Zacharias, the 71-year-old backer who spurred the DoveBar's going national.

The bars come in five ice-cream flavors: chocolate, strawberry, vanilla, coffee and coconut.

Stefanos scoffs at rivals who say the DoveBar is just "a candy bar on a stick."

"I eat them," he said. "I love them. They are terrific."

DoveBars are available in California, Arizona, Colorado, Texas, Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Ohio, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Washington, D.C.

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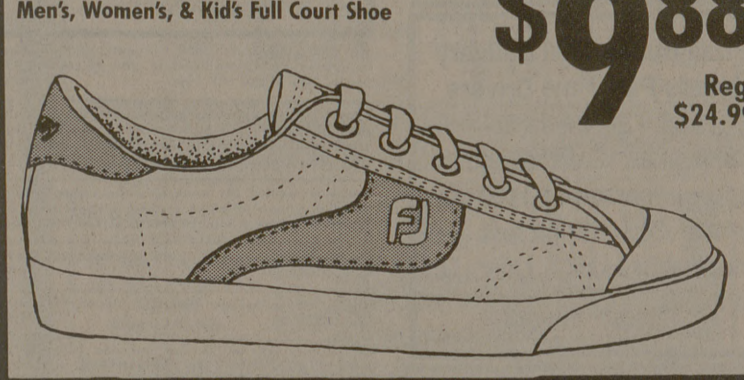
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