

## THIS WAY FORWARD

## SMART VENTURES



## Ice Cream by Land or Sea

>>> *Cowabunga delivers the tasty cold treats of summer – any time of year.*

*By Sharon Sheridan*

**If you're looking for a little taste of summer**, Cowabunga Ice Cream delivers – on land or sea.

Launched as a “local brick-and-mortar store” next to a town park in Forked River three years ago, the family-owned firm soon expanded into delivering anywhere in the country.

This summer, Cowabunga is adding a new venture: an ice cream boat delivering hand-scooped frozen delicacies boat to boat in Tices Shoal on Barnegat Bay near Island Beach State Park.

The Schack family started Cowabunga in a building near Gille Park, which boasts a walking path and various sports fields. “We figured it was a good location because a lot of people walk to the park,” says Ellen Schack, Cowabunga co-founder. “In the summertime, people stroll over with their families and come and get ice cream.”

She says the ice cream developed into a niche product. “We didn’t want

to do just what everybody else was doing. We wanted to go with the best ingredients and the highest quality.”

Shack and her husband Ed, co-founder and COO of the company, found a cooperative distributor and explained what flavors they wanted to make. The distributor helped the new owners create recipes, which they’ve tweaked over time.

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A nutty pleasure: one of Cowabunga Ice Cream’s 16 flavors.

Cowabunga started with more than 30 flavors, letting customers whittle down the list to their favorite 16. The company also offers seasonal flavors, including pumpkin in the fall. “We have people that don’t even like pumpkin pie that love it,” Schack says. “We make pies out of it for Christmas and also for Thanksgiving. ... [We] probably will do something like key lime pie or peach yogurt for summer.”

Cowabunga also carries strawberry, chocolate, peanut butter and red velvet cake yogurts made with actual yogurt cultures – “all the things that are great for your digestion” – that run 120 to 150 calories per serving, Schack says.

Over time, the business expanded to include an online store. The Cowabunga staff investigated ways to ship ice cream and now can send sweet treats nationwide overnight or two-day shipping, thanks to packaging with dry ice that makes the ice cream so cold, you need to put it in your freezer to warm up, she says. “Ice cream that’s too cold – strange, right?”

Barnegat Bay will provide the next frontier with the launch of this summer’s ice cream boat. Some people have asked about franchises, which is a possibility for the future, she says. “That’s down the road, but it’s something that we’re open to.”

Cowabunga employs about 10 people, including family members.

Although it chose a rough economic climate to start Cowabunga, “We weren’t really scared about it. All the stars were aligning,” Schack says.

“We are holding our own right now.” **NJB**