

# Researchers find ice cream is a 'good source' of calcium

By **LINDSEY ALBRECHT**  
AGGIE NEWS WRITER

As announced in the March/April issue of California Agriculture, 21 of 54 ice cream brands and 10 of 15 frozen yogurt brands available in California officially meet the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's definition of a "good source" of calcium.

In addition, two of the ice creams can be considered a "good source" of vitamin A, as a single serving provides 10 percent or more of the recommended daily value for the nutrient.



Christine Bruhn,  
UC Davis Center

for Consumer Research director, and her husband John Bruhn, UCD Dairy Research and Information Center director, compiled this data as part of a 1995 study on nutritional content variation.

According to Christine Bruhn, the Nutritional Labeling and Education Act of 1990 altered existing criteria for product labeling, resulting, in part, in specific legal definitions for now-familiar terms such as "light" and "low fat." These changes, while granting the public with greater consumer knowledge, have also presented a challenge to manufacturers.

"The food service industry has the task of providing products that taste good and are nutritional," she said. "Choices today are different than they were five years ago."

Bruhn said her interests lie in understanding why people make the choices they do.

"My focus is to tell people what choices are available to them, and to help the industry understand what the public wants," she said. "This study explored how the label has worked to make more choices available."

According to Bruhn, because of major health concerns such as osteoporosis, the public has become increas-



CHRISTINE DEASIS/AGGIE

**UC Davis researcher Christine Bruhn samples some ice cream, a food she discovered fits within federal guidelines as a good calcium source.**

ingly concerned with calcium intake.

"I'm especially interested in ice creams — they're not just treats," she said. "Ice cream does contain nutrients, and it's one of our favorite foods."

The Bruhns conducted this study over a period of about nine months. It consisted of recording nutritional data on ice cream labels from various locations throughout the state.

"We actually went into the marketplace," said John Bruhn, a dairy foods specialist at UCD whose studies include the safety and quality of dairy-foods processing.

"When Christine and I had joint professional meetings, we used our spare time to check ice cream and yogurt labels in grocery stores," he said.

According to John Bruhn, the selection of available ice creams and frozen yogurts is relatively constant throughout the state, with most venues carrying a combination of premium and standard brands. The collection of data took approximately nine months.

After completing the study, the Bruhns sent the compiled data back to the manufacturers for review, in case any mistakes had been made during collection.

"We sent the table back to the manufacturers as a check, for everyone's added assurance," he said. "Sometimes they change formulations, or we might have jotted something down wrong, and we wanted to make sure our information was correct."

The Bruhns' study found Haagen-Dazs, Ben & Jerry's and Knotts ice creams to be leaders in both calcium and vitamin A content, and many frozen yogurts, including Haagen-Dazs, Lucerne and Colombo, were found to be good sources of calcium.

Overall, the Bruhns said that amid the great variation in ice cream and yogurt content, they found many brands have considerable nutritional value.

"Though, unfortunately, one can't have an ice cream diet, there are nutritional benefits nonetheless," John Bruhn said.