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Paradise Bakery: Seven tastes, all with a smile

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My college economics professor once explained that information is the most valuable commodity for consumers. If you don't know what you're buying, you're in trouble. Unless you chew things over, you're likely to turn out an all-day sucker.

I kept this advice in the back of my mind as I waited in line at Paradise Bakery last Sunday. It was a warm afternoon, the first day of spring, and Paradise was predictably crowded. The three scoopers behind the counter, as they always seem to be at Paradise, were beaming with sugar-sweet smiles and cherry-topped cheeriness.

But could they handle a consumer of my acumen? I decided to put them to the test.

"I'd like to invest in a scoop of ice cream," I said, squaring up to the counter.

"Ok, what flavor would you like?"

"I don't know yet."

"Well, you can try a few flavors."

"Exactly. I'll try the Mountain Man Mint Cookie" (long pause as I thoughtfully chew).

"Hmm, that's good. How about the Tropical Coconut" (another long pause).

"And the Vanilla Chocolate Flake?"

"What about the Creamy Cappuccino?"

"Banana Nut Muffin?"

At this point, a rubbernecking traffic jam had formed behind me, as people watched my performance in awe and disgust.

"Hmm, that Raspberry Chocolate looks interesting. Can I try it?" I continued, my five

tasting spoons spread in my grip like a poker hand.

Finally, mercifully, after seven tastes, I settled on Mountain Man Mint Cookie. Not once did the woman helping me scoff, or sigh, or

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clobber me over the head with her scooper. I asked whether she had developed carpal tunnel, or some other repetitive stress syndrome from all the tastings. She smiled and said she didn't mind.

Wow, I thought, this was customer service.

"Do you need a spoon?" she asked, handing me my single-scoop cup.

"Nah, I've got seven," I replied. "But thanks."

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Walker Mills, left, and Keith Goode serve ice cream at the Paradise Bakery. Apparently they don't even mind if you ask for seven consecutive samples. Aspen Times photo/Paul Conrad.