



AN ICE SURPRISE: An unexpected discovery in the supermarket led to blissful memories of ice cream treats from years gone by

Shopping surprise sparks sweet memories

TRAWLING round the supermarket last week on automatic pilot, reaching for the regular staples, I stopped by the freezer cabinets and had a Proustian moment.

There it was – a thing I hadn't seen in years, had completely forgotten and presumed it long since discontinued. Viennetta!

You must remember Viennetta – a frozen confection the size of a house brick, composed of crisp meringue layered with razor-thin shards of dark chocolate and ice cream. An ambrosial treat occasionally served in modest slices as a summer Sunday dessert.

I drove home and, abandoning the rest of the shopping on the kitchen floor, opened the carton, slid out its contents (considerably smaller than I remembered) and nearly broke the blade of the bread knife sawing at it, still rigid as a stone. And yes, texture and taste were as I recalled, if perhaps a little less rich. My palate is probably ruined by over-indulgence in ice cream Mars bars and even scrummier ice cream Snickers, both of which I heartily endorse.

Like most of my generation, I wasn't reared on readymade puddings or 'bought' desserts. I can still smell my mother's nutmeg-dusted egg custard or rice pudding with raisins in it blipping away in the oven. There was sherry trifle for high days and holidays, enhanced with a tin of 'fruit cocktail', a mix of chopped peaches and pears in viscous syrup with a single faintly alcohol scented maraschino cherry per tin – which I never got. My mother was mistress of portion control and I always felt two spoonful short of bliss. I'm sure it was psychologically damaging.

Ever conscious of domestic economy, another treat in our house was 'flummy'. Half-set jelly was

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whipped to cloud-like airiness with a tin of evaporated milk and put to set on a high shelf, inaccessible to a small child armed with a teaspoon. (Just my luck to encounter it again at college, where because of its unsubstantiality, it was known by the students as 'sunshine and fresh air'.)

Ice cream was a rare treat, since (a) we didn't have a fridge; (b) I was told it 'chilled the stomach' and (c) that stuff you got in the cinema was made of whale oil. On one unforgettable occasion my childhood friend and I pooled our pocket money and bought what was known as "a shillin' y block," aka 'family size'. We scoffed the lot in two soup

plates behind the bushes in her back garden and never got caught.

Not that we here in the northwest were short of the authentic artisanal article. With four Italian ice cream making families in the city, we were spoiled for choice. Cassoni's at the "enna-the-bridge" (in Derry parlance) had at my school and her dad generously supplied Sports Day ice cream every year. Battisti's (invariably and erroneously pronounced Baptisti's, which is harder to say) was opposite Woolworths, so Saturday shopping was a double delight. Yannarelli's was where you went to meet College boys accidentally and Fiorentini's (always miscalled 'Florentini's, which must have irritated them intensely) was where everybody took their kids for a sit-down treat. Daughter Dear's ambition as a child was to become a 'Saturday girl' working there, making Knickerbocker Glories.

They were also the places where, as adolescent poseurs, we were first introduced to proper machine-made coffee. It was considered 'cool' (a term back in vogue) to order it black, rather than the Coke you really wanted. I must've downed gallons of the bitter stuff sooner than admit I hated it, but was merely an accessory to flirtation – and we must all suffer for love. Student days in a flat inured us to hardship, since nobody ever remembered to buy milk and it facilitated many an all-night session of last-minute study.

Now all four ice-cream parlours have vanished, much mourned, and we're buying mass produced salted caramel soft-scoop in supermarkets or extruded polystyrene-tasting cones from a van with a relentless jingle that would drive you doolally.

Oh, how I miss my Sunday afternoon butterscotch nut sundae....

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ON THIS DAY

JULY 6 1971

Machine-Gun attack

A MACHINE-GUN attack on an Army Land Rover in Leeson Street, Belfast yesterday, when two soldiers and two civilians were wounded and several others, including three young children, had narrow escapes, was condemned last night by Lower Falls Citizens' Defence Committee. The body accused those responsible of having 'a callous disregard for human life'. The statement, issued with the full support of Fr Padraig Murphy, Administrator at St Peter's Pro-Cathedral and other priests of the parish, deplored 'the senseless violence that keeps recurring in our parish'.

The names of the two soldiers were being withheld. The civilians are Mr William McCleave of Hardinge Street, who suffered a gunshot wound to the head as he threw himself down to shield his three young children, and Mr James Shannon, Gortin Street. Several hours later, a number of explosions rocked the Lower and Upper Falls area.

Ardoyne Protest over Orange March

THREE hundred women have protested against the imposition of a 'mini-curfew' in Ardoyne when Orange bands broke an Army ban on playing as they marched along the Crumlin Road last Friday night. Before the parade, Army officers gave Ardoyne Citizens' Defence Committee a written assurance that the bands would not play after leaving Cambrai Street. But they did play and this resulted in a stone-throwing incident during which troops fired rubber bullets to disperse a crowd of youths.

Fifteen Arrested in Mob Rule in Lisburn

FIFTEEN arrests were made by police in Lisburn when a Protestant extremist mob stormed Chapel Hill, the town's Catholic quarter, and petrol bombs were thrown and property damaged before they were driven from the area. After a weekend of violence in the town, the mob finally dispersed in the early hours of yesterday when rain fell. It was a nightmare weekend for the Catholic population of the Chapel Hill area. And last night the committee of St Patrick's parish, Lisburn, angrily repudiated press reports that a flag was flown from parochial property or that any provocation whatever was offered. Of the fifteen persons arrested, thirteen were later released to appear in court on summons. Two men were charged with a petrol bomb attack on the local AOH Hall. (The approach to the 1971 Twelfth saw an escalation of violence in Belfast, Derry, Lisburn, Lurgan and other towns. This included rioting at Orange marches, a Loyalist assault on Lisburn's Catholic district and IRA gun and bomb attacks on troops. The use of a machine-gun in an attempt to kill soldiers in West Belfast marked a serious escalation of the IRA campaign.)

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