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## Former Nike exec dips into the ice cream business

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Its origin story is about as Norman Rockwell Americana as they come: In 1945, a woman named [Alice Handel](#) decided to start selling ice cream made with strawberries she'd picked from her backyard out of her husband's gas station in Youngstown, Ohio.

Word spread quickly, and soon she'd opened a standalone location that was known to serve 1,700 people in just a few hours on its busiest Sunday afternoons.

Fast-forward seven decades, and Handel's Homemade Ice Cream now has more than 40 locations in eight states, including, as of last year, Oregon. [Tim Joyce](#), a former vice president of global sales for [Nike](#), opened his first Handel's franchise last summer in Sherwood.

Now he's gearing up for a second location, this one on Portland's west side at 13539 N.W. Cornell Rd., which is expected to open by July 1.

"I've been going to Handel's since the early 60s," said Joyce, who also did stints with Adidas and American Sporting Goods after leaving Nike in 1999. "It's all about the homemade ice cream."

Joyce got the first hint of someday owning his own Handel's some 25 years ago when he met [Leonard Fisher](#), Handel's president. Fisher had purchased the ice cream company from [Alice Handel](#) in 1985, when there was still just the one Ohio location.

"People had told me, 'She'll never talk to you. She's shy and old and mean,'" Fisher said. "But I did meet her and she did talk to me. She was shy and old but definitely not mean."

Fisher slowly expanded the company over the years, eventually growing it to its current size. In addition to Joyce's new Portland store, Fisher said five others should open this year, and there should be 50 total stores by the end of 2019.

Unlike the more adventurous trend that's wound its way through the local ice cream scene in recent years, with the likes of Salt & Straw and Ruby Jewel and their gourmet, more foodie-focused flavors, Handel's aims for a more approachable level.



CATHY CHENEY | PORTLAND BUSINESS JOURNAL

Former Nike executive Tim Joyce is prepping to open his second Handel's Homemade Ice Cream store in the metro region. His first, in Sherwood, opened last year; his Portland store should be open by July 1.

"We are not the rose flavored ice cream. We're not arugula," Fisher said. "We are vanilla and chocolate and strawberry. We are the all-American ice cream."

That said, Handel's does offer 48 flavors, so its menu runs fairly deep with varied concoctions like pumpkin ripple, German chocolate cake and salty caramel truffle.

The company also prides itself on the fact that it makes all its ice cream in its stores and that, according to Fisher, its servings are larger and priced lower than many of its competitors.

The model is one that's worked well for Handel's. It's also one that has caught the eye of Meriwether Group, the prominent Portland business consultancy that has helped propel companies like Voodoo Doughnut and Stumptown Coffee to national stages.

"We always look at the heart and soul first. You can't R and D that in the lab," said David Howitt, founder and CEO of Meriwether Group. "What we see here with Handel's is unbelievably compelling."

According to Howitt, Meriwether is working with Handel's much the way it worked with Voodoo. After a stint of consulting and a bit of investment, Meriwether introduced the funky doughnut company to San Francisco's Fundamental Capital, which last year made a significant investment aimed at fueling a national expansion.

"We are using the traditional Meriwether Group playbook, acting as an advisor and shaping the strategy, putting a little of our money into the equation and bringing in the right investor partners who can add the bigger numbers at the right time," he said. "It's not dissimilar to Voodoo, where we provided capital, and when the time was right, we went out and brought in the big one."

As for Joyce, he said his immediate focus is on opening the second Portland-area Handel's store, but he's also already eyeballing other Oregon markets like Bend, Eugene or Corvallis that could be a good fit for Handel's. Some cities in Washington could work well, too.

"There is a gap in the market right now, so there's lots of room," he said. "I'm looking forward to growing it."

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*Portland Business Journal*



