

Rice Dream® Non-Dairy Frozen Pies (Vegan)

When I first laid eyes upon the cookie & ice cream sandwiches from Rice Dream, I realized how long it had been since I had enjoyed one of these frozen concoctions, otherwise known as novelties. My appetite grew wide with anticipation.

After snapping a few quick photos, as I could find no images on the Internet, we each eagerly grabbed a frozen pie. The overall excitement was well noted by the simultaneous noise of plastic wrappers being opened and pulled to the sides.

The generous sizing of each pie was a pleasant surprise. They were not so big that our stomachs might later regret every bite, but they were quite substantial. Further proof that transitioning to natural food does not need to result in downsizing. Mint

The Mint Pie was the first flavor I opted to trial. Back in my BNR days as a child, mint chocolate chip was one of my favorites (next to pralines and cream of course!). The occasional brownie sundae was incomplete without a scoop of ice cream, and mismatched if it wasn't mint in my opinion.

I took my initial bite, and immediately noticed the very soft and forgiving nature of the cookies. As I broke through these dessert shields, I was met with a cool crisp mint & ice cream at the center. My first tastes were more & ice cream than cookie. Though all was enclosed in a thin chocolate coating, the outer edges housed purposeful spillovers of the frozen dessert. This turned out to be the only turn-off of this particular flavor.

As the Rice Dream melted slowly on my tongue, an unfamiliar bitterness emerged. It seemed to be the mint, in a very potent amount. Each taster noted the overwhelming power of the mint. It encouraged a somewhat harsh and bitter aftertaste. We all agreed that a reduction in peppermint flavor would surely benefit this variety. Luckily, when thin slices of the mint Rice Dream were sandwiched firmly between the two cookies, just the right amount of cool peppermint flavor was allowed to surface. It seemed only the bites sans cookie contained too much flavor for our liking.

The rice cream texture somewhat mimicked the cool refreshing intent of the mint. Though obviously a creamy selection, it took on more of an ice milk consistency than an ice cream. It was cool and firm, yet melted to a creamy sweet milk, and contained none of the disturbing ice chunks found in many of the frostier ice cream selections. I felt this & lighter core was a good match to balance out the overall indulgence of this rice cream sandwich. I was also very pleased with the very fair color of the mint rice cream. It was obviously produced with natural flavor, and without added color for fake green aesthetics.

The cookies were the unidentifiable "any cookie America" type, neutral but delicious. They were the color and consistency of your standard chocolate chip cookie sans chocolate chips. Though on their own, they may not wow, these seemed to be the perfect cookies for frozen pies. Both cookies were very soft and tender, almost doughy. This was a good move, as some firmer cookies seem to take on an almost gummy texture when paired in an ice cream sandwich.

I would definitely like to give the Mint Pie another shot, but hope that the folks at Hain Celestial will consider using a lighter hand with the peppermint. Because the frozen pie as a whole was a tasty childhood reminiscence, I was eager to give another flavor a shot. Vanilla

To avoid overindulgence, we saved our second rice cream pie for another day. Once I bit into this second flavor, I was grateful that I came prepared with a good appetite. For me, this was the one!

Again, the lighter ice milk texture kept the chocolate-coated cookie indulgence in check. The vanilla seemed to lean more towards the creamy side than the mint, but it was still more refreshing than rich. As the first bite dissolved on my tongue, the firm texture gave way to that familiar creamy sweet milk. But this time, my taste buds were very pleased with the aftertaste. The flavor was pleasantly vanilla, and noticeably from the bean, with no artificial or overpowering notes.

The vanilla pie contained the same soft and thick cookies as the mint version, obviously the Rice Dream signature cookie for these novelties. Just when I thought I had found perfect harmony between the rice cream, the cookies, and the something tastes different. Did they use a dark chocolate for the coating? I noticed an intense flavor, that was slightly bitter and flat, but still sweet and rich. Odd, I thought. I grabbed the package and made the

discovery, it was carob! As a carob fan, it was to my liking. One taster didn't like the distinct coating, albeit quite thin and not overly influential, but this is to be expected with carob.

I would not hesitate to serve the Vanilla Pies to any disbelieving non-vegans or real ice cream sandwich fanatics. Aside from the slight carob spin, nothing seemed amiss in this frozen treat. In fact, after agreeing upon the familiarity of this Rice Dream Pie, someone identified it as a close cousin to the chocolate coated ice cream sandwiches they used to get from the ice cream truck as a kid.

I will buy this one again!

My Extra Notes & Tips:

- Whoever said natural food is expensive? Though made only with quality ingredients, these pies are a very affordable treat on the go. At my local Wild Oats, I was able to locate these sizable treats for just \$.79 each on sale. I believe they were only \$.99 regular price! Considering the generous size of these hand pies, I would call this a deal.
- The soy-based ice creams tend to be a bit creamier, but for hot days, the cooler and lighter feel to the rice-based ice creams would be my preference.
- Alas, these are not the best option for those who have severe food allergies. The chocolate/carob coatings are made on shared equipment with milk containing chocolates, and may contain traces.
- Go straight to the Taste a Dream website for ingredients and nutritional information.

Where to Purchase: Rice Dream frozen desserts are available throughout the United States in most natural food grocers (i.e. Whole Foods) and many conventional grocers as well. See their website for a store locator.