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Blackwell's by [Eric Levin](#) Organic wins top award, goes easy on tummies.



*Blackwell's organic strawberry gelato.*

Tom Blackwell is a tinkerer. And a perfectionist. "I always want to understand things," he says. "My neighbors and my wife had to suffer through 25 meringue pies until I found exactly what worked best."

Blackwell also is lactose intolerant. He didn't like any of the dairy-free frozen desserts on the market, so he decided to make his own. Calling in the neighbors again, he and his wife, Marcia (Mar-SEE-a), held tastings. The findings? "What people like is lots," he says. "They like lots of cocoa in their chocolate gelato, lots of strawberries in their strawberry sorbetto."

The tipping point came when the telecom startup where Marcia was office manager went belly up. She and Tom, who installs and repairs fire sprinkler systems, decided to turn his desserts into a business. In 2005, the Long Branch couple launched Blackwell's Organic.

Tom's organic fruit sorbetto and soy gelatos use fair trade evaporated cane juice rather than sugar substitutes, which require stabilizers to keep the product from freezing rock solid. "Sugar is the antifreeze in ice cream," he says. "It's the only antifreeze I'm willing to eat." Since most stabilizers contain gluten, Blackwell's wound up being gluten free as well as dairy-free.

"It's not about doing without," says Marcia. "We've created a dessert that everyone in the family can love—your lactose-intolerant nephew, your vegan daughter, and your meat-loving son."

In July, Blackwell's raspberry sorbetto won the Sofi Gold Award for outstanding organic product at the Summer Fancy Food Show in New York. Blackwell's Organic, made in Red Bank, is sold at all Whole Foods in New Jersey as well as at many specialty stores.