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expansion over the past two years, Pinkberry now boasts almost 30 locations, mostly in the greater Los Angeles area. Much to the chagrin of her neighbors, Hwang's original shop on Huntley Street now serves up to 1,600 customers a day.

Hwang never could have predicted the immediate cult following her frozen dessert would elicit. In those first few months of Pinkberry's existence, a loyal fan base was established; many devotees refer to the yogurt as "Crackberry" and will get it almost every night of the week. Pinkberry's Web site even has its own jingle: "Swirly and fluffy, like a dream ... sorry ice cream. I'm on my way to Pinkberry."

Unable to get the song out of my head, I desperately wished a Pinkberry would open in San Diego. Imagine my joy when I found out that the company was building its first location on the ground floor of the new Hard Rock Hotel in the Gaslamp Quarter. (Prepare yourself for late-night lines snaking down Fifth and K when the shop opens its doors in January.) Residents of Hillcrest can celebrate the fact that Pinkberry plans to open a second location at Fourth and Robinson later next year.

According to the yogurt chain, Pinkberry is "honest food without preservatives, additives or excess sugar. It is dessert reinvented." At only 50 to 70 calories per half cup, even a large serving of the green tea yogurt weighs in at a slight 180 calories. The same serving of Breyer's all-natural vanilla ice cream packs a whopping 504 calories.

With only two flavors of yogurt, fans tend to get their kicks from a selection of fresh fruit toppings and zany chocolate sweets. For those who'd rather eat their yogurt through a straw, the folks at Pinkberry can blend their dessert into a refreshing smoothie. To opt for an even lighter dessert, order the shaved ice that uses a dollop of swirled yogurt as a garnish.

www.pinkberry.com



Fruberry

They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. That must be why every yogurt shop in Southern California is mimicking Pinkberry's sleek Asian aesthetic, simple yogurt flavors and colorful retro design. Even the names and logos are eerily similar. Luckily for these copycats, the folks behind the real Pinkberry do not have the time nor want to go after these "fakeberries."

Next on the list in my hunt for the perfect cup of fro-yo is Fruberry, located downtown on busy Fifth Avenue just north of the Gaslamp. The interior of this yogurt shop has the same hard molded plastic chairs, stark white walls and minimalist Asian design as Pinkberry, but it is the parking opposed to the line that is atrocious.

Fruberry starts growing on me, however, upon meeting the store manager, Elijah Brown. He is very knowledgeable about his shop's

selections, saying that Fruberry is "the first of its kind." I am taking that to mean the owner, Kim Chang, has plans to open a chain of Fruberrys in the future, as the actual concept of the store is nothing new.

Although they offer the standard original plain and green tea yogurts, Fruberry boasts a slightly bigger menu of flavors than the typical fro-yo shop. The green apple flavor is perfectly tart and the cheesecake flavor (the only ice cream flavor) is smooth and delicious; I am guessing it is the extra calories that make it so satisfying.

Fruberry's flavors have not changed in the four months they've been in business and all of their fruit toppings, with the exception of peaches and pineapple, are organic. "That way we avoid artificial flavors," Brown explains. When ordering, the staff suggests choosing a