



# The Ice Cream Club and Ryder

*Helping small businesses grow with big company treatment*

## CHALLENGE

Ice Cream Club® needs to ensure excellent product quality from manufacturing all the way through distribution, for highly-sensitive, temperature-controlled ice cream delivered to customers within tight time frames and in remote areas.

## SOLUTION

Ryder's Full Service Lease solution provides custom vehicle features suited to ice cream delivery, as well as preventive maintenance to keep a small business like The Ice Cream Club delivering products without breakdowns or interruptions.

## RESULTS

### Efficient

*Immediate access to temporary vehicles eliminates delivery interruptions*

*Well maintained trucks means quick, successful inspections and safety compliance*

### Better predictability

*Preventive truck maintenance performed on downtime maximizes customer service time*

*"Anytime, anywhere" responsiveness from Ryder means service that meets crucial needs*

### Outstanding customer service

*Custom truck features make deliveries easier so drivers can focus on customers*

*Ryder's support helps The Ice Cream Club meet customers' emergency needs*

*It's almost impossible not to smile when you see a truck delivering ice cream coming our way. This is especially true if it's a delivery from The Ice Cream Club, a leading regional manufacturer and distributor of premium, parlor style ice cream, yogurt and related products in the Southeastern United States.*



Founded in 1982 as a small business with a single ice cream shop by Tom Jackson and Richard Draper, The Ice Cream Club now distributes 175 flavors of ice cream and mixes to over 550 ice cream shops, retirement communities, restaurants, food service accounts, and wholesale accounts throughout the southeastern and mid-atlantic United States, as well as the Caribbean islands.

Today, Jackson oversees all aspects of production, and Draper, who was joined his by wife Heather in 2008 after a distinguished career in the banking industry, together lead administration, sales, and distribution.

The Boynton Beach, Florida-based company helps ensure the success of its long-term customers by distributing its award-winning products to select ice cream dipping stores and food service accounts. Staying true to its small business roots, The Ice Cream Club, which now has nearly \$11 million a year in revenue from producing one million gallons of ice cream annually, also offers its small business customers a unique opportunity to leverage the company's look, name, and products without paying franchise prices and fees.

Key to the company's success is the great taste of its ice cream, which

is hand-ladled the old fashioned way in The Ice Cream Club's 18,000 square-foot plant. The Drapers say it takes longer to do, but their fans say it's definitely worth it. The Ice Cream Club® and Yogurt Club® Brand products have consistently been voted Best Ice Cream by the readers of The Palm Beach Post, Palm Beach Illustrated Magazine, Palm Beach Life, South Florida Magazine, and the Miami Herald. The International Dairy Foods Association also recently recognized The Ice Cream Club for its innovative ice cream flavors.

Delivering this kind of deliciousness requires a laser focus on quality control. Production at The Ice Cream Club's plant is regulated and inspected by the Food and Drug Administration and its products are sampled regularly by the Florida Department of Agriculture. The

company also maintains a dairy laboratory on premise to ensure quality and develop new products. The facility is overseen by a full-time quality control director with a degree in dairy science from the University of Florida and over 25 years of experience.

### ***Distribution: an end-to-end commitment to product excellence***

As small business owners, the Drapers fully realize that a commitment to product excellence doesn't end when the ice cream leaves the plant. Delivering it at the perfect temperature, and on schedule, is essential to customer satisfaction.

"Ice cream is not forgiving. Its distribution is the tough side of the business to the extent that it is often the barrier to entry into the industry," says Richard, who serves on the Board of Directors of the International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA) and the board of the All-Star Dairy Association. He is also secretary of the International Ice Cream Association (ICCA). "We can be carrying as much as \$30,000 worth of inventory on a single truck and lose it if we break down and don't have immediate truck replacement service. Saving the product and the route in the event of a breakdown is vital for us." Richard remembers making deliveries in a pick-up truck with a cooler when he first started The Ice Cream Club.





“We had an embarrassing array of vehicles for a while,” he says, laughing. “It was a big deal for a small company when we decided to invest in a truck. But as we were moving away from retail to wholesale, we weighed the cost against the benefits, and it quickly became apparent that having the fixed costs of the truck, its maintenance, and breakdown and loaner service were much better for us.”

Richard selected Ryder for the company’s first truck lease in 1996, and has added seven more since.

“When most people think of Ryder, they think of Fortune 500 companies using the company’s service,” says Heather. “Having their truck made us look bigger than we were and it was a blessing for us to be able to experience the same safety, maintenance and replacement service that bigger companies are able to have.”

### ***The right fleet helps small business grow***

That first Ryder truck was a game-changer for The Ice Cream Club in several ways, Richard maintains, due in large part to the modifications Ryder made to accommodate the company’s needs. Ryder representatives spent a great deal of time and energy customizing that and subsequent trucks specifically for The Ice Cream Club, he notes.

“The challenge was to keep the integrity of the product as drivers could be out on routes for two to four days. Customers won’t accept the ice cream if it’s even slightly soft, so there is a strong sense of urgency in delivery,” says Michael J. Steetle, the Ryder customer development manager who works with the Drapers.

Over its 80 year history, Ryder has come to serve a wide variety of customers - from small businesses to Fortune 10 companies, including over 4,000 food and beverage customers. In addition, more than 6,000 small business customers rely on Ryder for trucks and their maintenance. By renting, leasing and maintaining trucks with Ryder, small businesses save valuable time that they can instead invest in their core business. They also benefit from better predictability, especially knowing their trucks won’t breakdown while making deliveries.

Ryder’s trucks for The Ice Cream Club are Class B 26-footers that are heavily insulated to keep optimum temperature for the frozen products for days at a time. They have side steps, lift gates, and ramps to make delivery more convenient for drivers. “Drivers are the base of our company – and so important to its success. Their average tenure with us is 22 years,” Heather says.

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– Richard Draper,  
Co-founder, The Ice Cream Club

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“Keeping them happy and comfortable so when they see our customers they are smiling and able to provide the best service is key. Our culture is optimistic and they know they are making people happy when they are delivering our products.”

Accessories like padded driver seats, arm rests, extra gears and mirrors, exterior sun visors, high quality air-conditioning and stereo systems were part of the upgrades The Ice Cream Club and Ryder made to the trucks, which are also painted and wrapped in The Ice Cream Club colors and logo.



The Ice Cream Club drivers also have confidence that when they are stopped for a U.S. Department of Transportation roadside inspection, they will pass with flying colors, adds Draper: “Our drivers tell us that when inspectors see that the truck is maintained by Ryder, the reception is always great. Ryder has a great reputation for safety and service. This is important to them because any issues reflect on their record as well.”

Maintenance performed on a schedule that works for the busy trucks is essential to keep them on the road. The trucks average 50,000 to 60,000 miles a year; sometimes up to 30,000 to 35,000 miles per month; and about 1,000 miles a week. Each has about 30 routes, with over half being overnight and the longest lasting three nights. To accommodate this schedule with minimal down time, Ryder rotates the trucks one day a week through its maintenance process.

“Orders don’t come in on weekends – we are busiest delivering our products Tuesdays through Thursdays, so Mondays we are gearing up for production, distribution and allowing Ryder time to perform preventive maintenance,” says Richard. “Planning the maintenance in this way allows us to have it done when it’s most convenient for the business and Ryder can do the best quality job keeping the trucks in optimum condition, ready to deliver the products when needed. It’s a true partnership.”

### ***In times of need, small businesses help other small businesses***

Because the trucks are maintained so well, drivers are able to provide The Ice Cream Club customers with unparalleled service – even in emergencies, Heather says.

“We had a client in Alabama that we had been working with for more than 20 years whose power went out,” she says. “When that happened, they weren’t able to keep their freezers cold. When The Ice Cream Club’s driver arrived to make his regular delivery, he realized how dire the customer’s situation was – much of their current product would perish if not kept cold. So, he moved all of their product onto our freezer truck to keep it from spoiling during the power outage. In most cases, we would have had to sideline the rest of that day’s deliveries to our other customers. But with Ryder, we didn’t have to do that. We put in a phone call to them, and they were able to get a back-up truck out to the site. And as a result, we continued to make our other deliveries as scheduled. The level of customer service we were able to give our customer with a power outage in their time of need was amazing – and it’s because of Ryder’s partnership that we can make that happen.”

The Ice Cream Club is also able to serve its many customers in small towns with confidence because drivers know that if they have a breakdown – ‘even in the middle of nowhere,’ – Ryder will be able to

quickly get them a replacement truck with the right freezer capacity to keep them on the road, Richard says.

“We have to run like clockwork. Minimal downtime is crucial and Ryder is always part of the solution, even if it’s after hours and late at night. Their responsiveness is exceptional,” he adds. “Ryder has the best network to accommodate these types of emergencies and has relationships with companies like Carrier and Thermo King so that they can reach out and get the job done if their trucks aren’t available.”

The confidence the Drapers have working with Ryder allows them to focus on what they do best: making ice cream and growing their business. They plan to expand by adding clients all along the I-95 and I-10 corridors.

“Having the right equipment whenever we need it definitely gives us the edge over our competition and there’s no question that Ryder gives us that,” Richard says. “We share a true kinship with Ryder in that they have the same attitude we have toward distribution. It’s a tough business, there are risks to take and safety is a huge priority. But once you know you have what you need in place, it’s amazing to see how Ryder can help a small company like us grow. Even though we’re a small business making it happen every day, we get the big company treatment.”