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Ben & Jerry's shop apologizes for Lin misstep

By **Matt Rocheleau** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT FEBRUARY 27, 2012

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A local branch of Ben & Jerry's has apologized for briefly offering a frozen yogurt flavor inspired by professional basketball's sudden sensation Jeremy Lin that included fortune cookie pieces, in an acknowledgment that the dish could be seen as playing on Asian stereotypes.

"On behalf of Ben & Jerry's Boston Scoop Shops we offer a heartfelt apology if anyone was offended by our handmade Linsanity flavor that we offered at our Harvard Square location," the local company said Saturday on its Twitter account.

On Friday, Boston.com reported that the local Ben & Jerry's store had replaced the fortune cookie pieces

ingredient with a waffle cookie served on the side after what Ryan Midden, general manager of the local shops, called “a bit of an initial backlash.”

The fortune cookie pieces, which had been mixed into the first batches of the frozen yogurt pints, were also soggy, Midden said.

Though they are rarely, if ever, served in China, fortune cookies are a common dessert in Chinese restaurants in America and are believed to have been invented and popularized by Japanese immigrants. Lin, whose parents immigrated from Taiwan, was born and raised in California.

The new flavor, offered for a limited time and sold only at the Vermont-based chain's Harvard Square shop, sold out over the weekend, according to the Boston-area Ben & Jerry's Twitter.

At the shop yesterday, employees declined to comment and few customers said they personally were bothered that fortune cookies were used. But most said they were glad to hear the company had swapped out the ingredient and apologized.

Jodi Iwata said that she had read about the new flavor and its controversy in her hometown newspaper, the San Francisco Chronicle. Visiting the Boston area this week, she leaned over the counter and asked for a pint of “Taste the Lin-Sanity” but walked away empty-handed when the staff told her the limited batches had been completely cleaned out.

The ingredient she was focused on were the lychee honey swirls, which she said sounded appetizing. “It really wasn't a big deal,” she said of the fortune cookie ingredient, adding that the company's apology “couldn't hurt.”

Since the New York Knicks put him on the court in recent weeks because of injuries elsewhere on the team, Lin has been outperforming expectations and has become an overnight star. The 23-year-old, 6-foot 3-inch point guard played for Harvard but left the Cambridge campus two years ago undrafted and largely unknown.

“We are proud and honored to have Jeremy Lin hail from one of our fine, local universities and we are huge sports fans,” said the statement from the Ben & Jerry's Boston team. “We were swept up in the nationwide Linsanity momentum. Our intention was to create a flavor to honor Jeremy Lin's

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accomplishments and his meteoric rise in the NBA. . . . We try to demonstrate our commitment as a Boston-based, value-led business and if we failed in this instance we offer our sincere apologies.”

Others said those who felt offended should lighten up.

“People are taking themselves too seriously. People just need to ease up and have a sense of humor,” said Moise Elan, 33, of Cambridge, as he shared bites of a customized sundae. “It’s Linsanity, what other ingredients should people expect?”

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