

50 Forbes **fyi** 50 of AMERICA'S BEST

THE TIME HAS COME FOR A LITTLE SELF-CONGRATULATION. Not for ourselves *alone*, of course—we'd blush and get light-headed. ● No, it is time to pat America on the back. Not for being a beacon of freedom to the world, or for our advances in science and medicine and technology, or for conducting elections without having to get the Supreme Court involved. ● Let us instead praise this great nation for its supreme contributions to daily life: its hammocks, spin doctors, lobster, personal airplanes and pet photographers. Things that make you say, *By gum, you won't find that in Finland!* ● We could claim, as many magazines might, that this list is the fruit of years of research, of interviews with leading authorities in all fields, of scientific method and analysis. We won't. These 50 things are the best that America has to offer *because we say they are*. So there. The key question, when it came to the final selections, was—Does anyone else do or make this better? In every instance, the emphatic answer came back, "Probably not." ● This list covers a vast inventory: from yachts to doughnuts, from items costing six figures to a couple of dollars. Money wasn't the issue. Well, mostly it wasn't. "Give me the luxuries in life," Oscar Wilde once declared, "and I can dispense with the necessities." What matters in the end is the quality. Everything here is quietly, unmistakably American. Be proud. To paraphrase Mark Twain on Shakespeare, it really is a great country, despite all the people who say so.
CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY



BEST ICE CREAM: BLUE BELL CREAMERIES About 20 years ago, Blue Bell Creameries started mixing vanilla ice cream with cream-filled chocolate cookies. The company doesn't claim to have been the first with the idea, or even the first on the market, but folks in the South knew that Blue Bell, already the most luscious ice cream in the land, had now created the most sublimely luscious flavor, Cookies n' Cream. Founded in 1907, the company offers a variety of half-gallon creations, including Strawberries & Homemade Vanilla and seasonal varieties such as Peppermint, Chocolate Covered Cherries and Banana Pudding. Order online at www.bluebell.com or visit the Brenham, TX, factory (800-327-8135) to get a tour and a sample.