



COMMERCIAL KITCHEN MAINTENANCE TIPS



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Kitchen equipment is vital to your restaurant, and downtime can affect your profitability. Preventive maintenance not only saves money, it is often essential to keeping your warranty in force. The following suggestions will help you keep your equipment operating at peak efficiency.

Commercial refrigerators and freezers

A malfunctioning refrigeration unit impacts the quality of your food inventory almost immediately. The following equipment checks will help prevent unexpected breakdowns.

Daily

- Make sure that the temperature is not set lower than recommended. Also check that the unit is not set to auto-defrost more often than necessary. A refrigeration unit must work twice as hard to keep food cool when the setting is too low or the unit defrosts too often. Extra pressure on the unit can shorten its lifespan and increase the frequency of repairs.
- Check that the unit allows enough air flow to the cooling mechanisms. Blocked air flow puts added strain on the unit, increasing power consumption and the risk of overheating.
- Always keep the inside of the unit clean to prevent the buildup of gunk that can clog and damage working parts.

Monthly

- Clean all ice makers by disassembling them and removing any traces of dirt and mold.

Annually

Annual checks should be performed by a technician who is factory-trained for the particular make of your equipment. NWRS technicians typically perform the following:

- Test and calibrate thermometers to make sure the gauge reflects the actual temperature and that equipment complies with health regulations.
- Check for air leaks around all seals, hinges, gaskets and latches. Repair or replace any part that compromises the airtight barrier.
- Inspect condensing and evaporator coils and remove any dirt and grime. A buildup hinders the flow of heat through the coils, which leads to an inefficient and labored coil.

- Remove dirt and grease from the fan blades. Dirty blades increase resistance and slow down the motor.
- Check compressor and fan motor for signs of wear.
- Inspect all electrical connections and fix all loose wiring. Besides causing equipment failure, loose wires are a safety hazard.
- Check refrigerant levels to make sure there are no leaks and that levels are within operational requirements.
- Replace all parts that show signs of degradation.

Commercial ovens

- Check that the oven door seal is airtight. Heat escaping from a loose seal causes cooking and heat inefficiencies. This leads to increased cooking time, higher heating costs, and decreased oven lifespan.
- Check the fan hinges on convection and combination ovens. They should be tight and adequately oiled.
- Regularly empty and delime the steamer on combination ovens.
- Protect your oven with proper cleaning.
 - Clean the oven interior thoroughly at least once a day. This is in addition to cleaning any spills immediately after they happen.
 - Clean spills immediately before the food residue becomes baked on. Leftover crumbs and food residue continue to cook as you use the oven. The result is flavor contamination and eventually smoke release, which not only affects the flavor of your food but also negatively impacts the long-term performance of the unit.
 - All oven racks, regardless of the type of oven, require thorough cleaning every day.
 - Do a deep clean at least once a month to get rid of any food particles that might have been missed during daily cleanings. The owner's manual describes the right way to deep clean your unit.
 - Schedule a weekly or monthly manual deep clean for self-cleaning ovens to complement the daily automated self-cleanings.
- Periodically recalibrate the thermostat.
 - Use an internal oven thermometer to compare the actual temperature to the thermostat reading. If there is a difference in the readings, calibrate or replace your thermostat.
 - In addition to calibrating the thermostat, check the performance of any preset programs.

Commercial mixers

- Wipe down all parts that are prone to gunk buildup. Don't forget the auxiliary attachment ports, timer knob, and back rails.
- Dry all the washed parts thoroughly to prevent condensation that could cause rust.
- Perform a lubricant check once a month. As a general rule, you should lubricate bowl clamps twice a year and bowl lift side rails more frequently.
- Replace any seal that shows evidence of a leak. Leaks are commonly evident around the auxiliary attachment hub and planetary assembly.
- Deep clean the fan and protective grid around the motor. Even partial blockages can cause the motor to overheat.

- Schedule regular intervals to open and clean out the underside of the planetary assembly. This is also an opportunity to check for lubricant leaks or moisture, and make sure that the gears get appropriate amounts of grease. Unwanted rust can build up quickly if not kept in check.
- Inspect all safety features at least once a month or sooner if you suspect a problem. Check the power cord, wire safety cage, and plastic bowl guides.
- Remember to unplug the power cord before beginning any cleaning or maintenance tasks. Tie a cloth around the plug to make it obvious that it is out of commission. This will stop others from innocently plugging the unit back in if you step away from the cleaning job for a moment.

Commercial deep fryers

Self-maintenance

- Use the correct commercial fryer cleaning brush designed for your type of unit.
- Deep clean your fry pot at least every three to six months. Drain the fryer of all oil and fill it with water. Bring the water to a safe simmer and carefully scrub out the vat using a bristle brush. Simmer the water for an hour, then clean and dry the vat before refilling with fresh oil.
- Use the downtime to brush and clean the heating element. A clean element transfers heat more evenly, which helps it last longer. Check for deterioration or damage to the fry pot.

Annual service

- A qualified technician should check all deep fryer parts annually for wear and tear deterioration. Parts for special inspection include gas valves, burners, temperature and high-limit probes, mounting hardware, and many others. NWRS technicians typically perform the following:
- Inspect the heating element, thermostat and control panel. Faulty parts could lead to oil overheating and cause a fire.
- Inspect the cabinet on all sides for oil migration and oil build up. The presence of either may be an indication that the cabinet needs repair. Check the flue opening for any obstruction, which is commonly caused by oil or shortening that has accumulated and then solidified.
- Verify that all the gas connections are tight and free of leaks.
- Inspect complex wiring and components to maintain tight connections.
- Check that parts directly involved in heat transfer are free from oil build-up and debris that could become a fire hazard when exposed to heat.
- Make sure that safety features, such as reset and drain safety switches are functioning properly.

Commercial stoves, ranges, griddles and more

- Clean up messes as soon as possible. Clean any exterior parts as soon as the spill happens. Clean the inside at the end of each day.
- Take out all the removable parts that could collect food particles, such as drawers, trays and chutes. Clean and dry before replacing them.
- Take the time to clean any spills around the burners and pilot areas daily. Any food in this area could catch fire and damage the unit.
- Check and clean the venting system at least twice a year.
- Keep all reflective pans below the burners clean and shiny. Reflective surfaces send more heat up to the cookware and can save on heating cost.
- A clean stove top helps optimize the burners transfer heat to the cookware. This is true for all cooking surfaces, including broilers, griddles, ovens and fryers. Accumulated dirt makes it more

difficult for the appliance to heat or cook the food. The more energy it needs to do its job, the greater the strain on the unit.

- Check that valve handles turn easily; grease them with a high-temperature valve grease if necessary. A valve handle can break or become damaged if too much pressure is applied to a jammed handle.
- Protect range batteries from food spills by using sealing strips that are designed for the job.

Commercial dishwashers

The best way to maintain the condition of your dishwasher is to follow the precise cleaning instructions for your equipment. Most manufacturers provide detailed cleaning and maintenance instructions. Incorrect cleaning is the most common cause of early and unnecessary repairs.

- Use only cleaning materials recommended by the manufacturer. Some surfaces and working parts can become damaged by harsh chemicals.
- Remove all food particles and debris. These can clog and eventually damage components.
- Always scrape food residue from dishes and give them a quick rinse before you place them in the dishwasher. This minimizes the amount of food that can potentially damage the unit.
- Keep the door open and allow the unit to air-dry each night. A dry dishwasher is less conducive to mold and bacteria growth, both of which could lead to damage and health problems.
- Clean the filter every 20 cycles; refill the water tank at the same time.
- Arrange an annual inspection with a certified technician to make sure that all parts are working properly. A diagnosis can find hidden problems that you might not know about until it's too late.

Replacement parts are a good investment

- Don't shy away from replacing parts that show normal signs of wear and tear. Replacement parts are easy to come by and some are easy enough for you to replace yourself without the help of a professional.
- When you buy equipment, make sure that you keep all the manuals, model numbers, and purchase details in a safe place. Doing this makes it easier to activate the manufacturer's warranty and replace any parts.
- It's always better and less expensive to invest in preventive maintenance than to deal with major repairs. In many cases, failure to perform periodic maintenance can also void the manufacturer's warranty.

May we help you?

Northwest Restaurant Services is Puget Sound's leading provider of commercial kitchen installation, repair, and maintenance. If it concerns your restaurant, you can count on NWRS for 24/7 support and an exceptional track record of timely service. All our technicians are factory-trained, EPA-certified, and are qualified to perform repairs on a wide variety of food service equipment, including: dishwashers, ice machines, mixers and slicers, freezers, merchandisers, refrigerators, sandwich prep tables, and all types of gas and electric appliances.

We stand behind our work!

NWRS is factory-authorized to perform service on most major brands of commercial kitchen equipment. We back all our repairs with a 30-day warranty on labor, regardless of the manufacturer's warranty.