

# The Essential Restaurant Equipment Checklist

## Keeping your kitchen clean and efficient is no joke.

It not only means avoiding accidents, restaurant fires, and cases of foodborne illness, but also following each equipment manufacturer's instructions for cleaning, tracking and complying with warranties, plus knowing what aspects of the maintenance can be done by your staff — and what should be left to professionals.

Even a boss passionate about sanitation and maintenance can be overwhelmed by the amount of upkeep that a kitchen staff needs to stay on top of. With that in mind, here are our best recommendations for maintaining your equipment over time.

## **Once a Year**

- Clean pilot lights**  
on all gas-run equipment, such as ovens and grills, so that they continue to light properly. Follow the specific cleaning instructions from your equipment's manufacturer.
  - Have your fire suppression system inspected**  
(as well as your fire extinguisher) by a professional fire protection equipment company.
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## **Every Six Months** *(or according to the manufacturer's recommended schedule)*

- Have your exhaust hoods professionally cleaned**  
to avoid greasy hoods becoming a fire hazard.
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## **Monthly**

- Remove built-up grease**  
behind the ovens, ranges, or fryers to avoid a fire hazard.
  - Empty and clean freezers and ice machines**  
to avoid heavy frosting and bacteria issues.
  - Wash the walls**  
and ceiling of your kitchen.
  - Wipe down your dry storage**  
as flour, crumbs, and sugar left behind can attract pests.
  - Calibrate your thermometers**  
including free-standing, oven, and freezer thermometers — to ensure food safety standards continue to be met.
  - Sharpen your slicers**  
to ensure quality presentation, help maintain portion control, and lower waste potential.
  - Stock up your first aid kit**  
because the midst of an emergency is the wrong time to realize you're short on bandages or supplies to mitigate severe allergic reactions.
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## **Weekly**

- Wash and sanitize walk-in coolers**  
and be sure to empty them completely when you do to get every last inch clean.
  - Delime your faucets and sinks**
  - Clean your ovens**  
inside and out (follow the oven manufacturer's cleaning instructions to avoid damaging them) to ensure inset flavors or burnt residue don't get into what you're cooking.
  - Oil cast iron skillets**  
to ensure their upkeep. Remember, iron skillets should never be washed like regular pans because they'll rust.
  - Sharpen all kitchen knives**  
although cooks should hone their knives with their honing steel before each shift and as needed.
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## Daily

- Change the foil linings**  
on your grill, range, and flattop to avoid build-up of run-off grease and food particles.
- Wash your hood filters**  
in the dishwasher to ensure they get totally clean.
- Disinfect prep surfaces**  
and clean other equipment like your grill, range, flattop, and fryer (including underneath and behind them) thoroughly.
- Wash the can opener and meat slicers**  
if they've been used that day, drying them carefully — maybe even polishing — so as to avoid rust.
- Mop the floors**
- Wipe down walls**  
especially if you see any food debris or splashes.
- Disinfect trash cans**  
and surrounding areas of your kitchen.

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## At the End of Each Shift

Some tasks should be completed every shift to ensure the team on the next shift has a clean kitchen.

- Wash and sanitize all surfaces**  
including the cutting boards, the reach-in, the line, and all prep tables.
- Clean the outside of your fryers**
- Empty and clean the steam table**
- Securely cover all bins**  
in your reach-in cooler.
- Empty sanitizing buckets**
- Put all cleaning rags in dirty laundry**  
as well as all kitchen aprons and chefs' coats.
- Wash the kitchen floor and floor mats**
- Wash the floors of your walk-in refrigerator**

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## During a Shift as Needed

First and foremost, your kitchen staff should be avoiding cross-contamination, i.e. bacteria (usually from uncooked or undercooked meat) unintentionally transferred between surfaces.

- Switch cutting boards**  
and have separate sets for meat and vegetables.
- Wipe down the line and prep areas**
- Brush the grill**  
in between cooking red meat, fish, and poultry to avoid having flavors (and uncooked particles) contaminate the next dish.
- Change out sanitizing buckets and rags**  
periodically throughout the night.
- Wipe down the slicers**  
for your meat and cheese slicer after each use.
- Empty trash cans**  
as they fill up.

## Is It Time To Replace?

Ask yourself:

### Is it breaking down?

Whether you bought it used or simply had it for years and years, even equipment with consistent maintenance and prompt repairs will start to break down.

### Is it still performing optimally?

Do your grills get to the proper temperature? Is your high temp dishwasher starting to leave debris? Is food taking longer in the oven to cook?

### Is it still the right size?

If you're rebranding your restaurant to accommodate a new, larger customer base, chances are your existing equipment isn't fit to handle how busy your kitchen gets during any given shift.

### Is it energy efficient?

Kitchen equipment that's energy efficient can save you money on your monthly utility bills. And if you're looking to market your business as environmentally conscious, the first place to look is your equipment because the older units tend to use up so much more energy.

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## How To Dispose of Old Equipment

Does it still work? You could...

### Sell it

Inquire with the manufacturer if they have a buyback program (especially if you're purchasing a replacement from the same place) or place an ad online yourself.

### Donate it

Inquire with local organizations if there's a need. Not only will you be helping your local homeless shelter, soup kitchen, religious group, or charity, but you may be able to take a tax deduction for the donation.\*

If not...

### Scrap it

Look for local organizations that recycle stainless steel and other scrap metal. They may even be able to haul it away for free!

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**“We knew that to be successful in this venture, we had to expand our prep space. That is when we were introduced to Rewards Network, the restaurant angel, and we were able to pay for this expansion that more than doubled the size of our kitchen.”**

— Deborah Boardman-Lefevre, Owner  
*M Restaurant, Philadelphia, PA*  
*Rewards Network client since 2011*

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