



## *Beyond the Purchase:* Selecting, Caring For, and Maintaining Food Equipment

WHITEPAPER

## Introduction

Supermarkets do not fit the mold of your average industrial food processing and handling business. For one, there's the constant foot traffic. Shoppers mill up and down the aisles all day long. On any given day, 1 in 7 Americans are grocery shopping. Additionally, employees strive to attend to these customers' needs in the moment while taking on additional tasks like stocking shelves and prepping food.

In this fast-paced setting, it seems pretty clear that there's no room for downtime. To stay ahead of the curve and satisfy the needs of today's demanding consumer, retailers are reconfiguring their stores physically and conceptually to allow for the availability of on-the-go, freshly prepared foods like delectable wraps and sandwiches, rotisserie meats and popular sides dishes to name a few.

But without the proper equipment to produce and process these foodstuffs, the vision will never come to pass. So when it comes time to select, manage or repair machinery for prepared foods departments, supermarket managers must pay close attention to detail if they wish to stay on trend and yield profits.

In some ways, however, this is easier said than done. Scores of such equipment already exist for producing, handling, processing, preserving and packaging food. To simplify the process, decision-makers require a breakdown of their core departments and a list of their needs.

Let's start with The Big Three: the deli, the butchery and the bakery. From heavy-duty slicers used to cut cheeses and meats to the varied industrial mixers used to produce breads and pastries, there are important considerations at hand when stores hope to drive and optimize production.



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## Making the Right Choice

With the promise of profits in mind, it makes sense that the appropriate selection of equipment ranks highest on the list of priorities. But this requires thoughtful planning, as selecting and purchasing these tools can prove tedious and sometimes difficult. Thankfully, it doesn't have to be this way.

Before starting the selection process, investors should perform a needs assessment. Significant questions that can help shape these decisions include:

- How will this equipment improve my business in the short term?
- What about my long-term goals?
- Will this model improve food safety?
- Will this model help me comply with regulations?
- Can this investment enhance quality in the eyes of the consumers?

Drawing up a list of specifications can be useful. The list may include details such as necessary materials like filters, daily upkeep demands, ancillary maintenance packages and installation requirements.

Furthermore, decision-makers should factor in the equipment's safety protections and ability to meet regulatory guidelines. For obvious reasons, these features are paramount in the selection process. The selected equipment must not only deliver on customer expectations, but also safeguard shoppers' health by meeting industry standards for safety and quality.

Versatility is also an important consideration. Adaptable equipment enhances productivity and worker safety, as less time is needed for training employees on multiple machines. Versatile equipment also helps focus workers their knowledge and expertise on core technologies to keep themselves and others safe.

As mentioned, it also pays to envision the long-term utility of the equipment. In this regard, flexibility plays a key role. The right equipment helps mitigate life cycle costs if its users have the freedom to perform easy modifications or parts replacements as needed, particularly as service offerings and retail concepts change with the times.



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## Impacts of Proper Equipment Care and Maintenance

Finally, consider costs. Although the sticker price should not ultimately decide what equipment one buys, it doesn't hurt to see what's included in the sale. Perhaps there are opportunities for staff training from an equipment specialist?

On-demand emergency services? Warranty protections? Get as much bang for your buck as you can.

Once the purchasing decision has been made, implement steps that ensure the proper care and maintenance of the equipment. First, involve employees and provide them with adequate training. After all, they will use the equipment on a regular basis. They should know how to properly use and clean the new equipment. Initiating a methodical, consistent and frequent cleaning schedule, devising organizational techniques and ensuring proper storage of equipment all factor into this plan.

Employee training can work wonders. To be effective, however, it should establish a standard—which can prove indispensable during crucial cleaning and maintenance operations—as well as emphasize care and safety. In return, these procedures extend the shelf life of equipment while guaranteeing the availability of quality foods prepared by healthy and safe employees.

Ensuring proper maintenance goes hand-in-hand with prioritizing equipment care. Equipment that comes in contact with food should be regularly maintained according to industry standards.

This is achieved through careful, thorough and frequent inspections guided by experts who train employees on what to look for.



“ENSURING PROPER MAINTENANCE GOES HAND IN HAND WITH PRIORITIZING EQUIPMENT CARE.”

## Impacts of...cont.

Common problems with convection ovens, for example, include doors that are difficult to close or rock on their hinges. Users should also look out for cracks, tears or adhesion loss in the seals. The presence of coagulating grease and dust are also telltale signs of damage. To counter these effects, workers should know how to maintain a thorough cleaning schedule, prevent damage from heavy items resting on the equipment and check temperature accuracy.

But that's merely scratching the surface. Proper maintenance goes beyond keeping equipment in top shape to avoid costly repairs. It also involves safety. Precautions must be taken to make sure food is safe for consumption and the equipment used is safe for operation.

This can be achieved by setting and adhering to maintenance schedules and, most importantly, by guaranteeing comprehensive understanding of the inner workings of the equipment.

Establishing a culture of care early can have far-reaching implications in terms of product quality, safety and regulatory compliance.

Compliance is especially significant in the face of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). The measure calls for the establishment of food safety systems that place hazard analysis and preventive controls at the forefront of operations. The FSMA further emphasizes employee education, training, and/or experience necessary to manufacture, process, pack or handle clean and safe food.

Proper maintenance structures not only have internal impacts, but also wide-reaching repercussions. A well-documented preventive program, with detailed and documented procedures on how to care for equipment, allows for significant savings, as well as safe and seamless operations.



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# Our Approach, Our Presence

Horizon Bradco is a leading service and equipment solutions provider to the retail food industry. With headquarters in Schenectady, NY, Horizon Bradco is the premier partner for delivering an exceptional food shopping experience to major supermarkets, convenience stores and food commissaries throughout much of the East Coast. Its three divisions, six locations and over 300 team members lead the industry in food equipment, refrigeration and HVAC maintenance, repair, sales and installation.

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## **SOURCES:**

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<http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/ucm334115.html>