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Refrigeration for Pizza Restaurants

Selecting and Maintaining Cold Storage for Your Pizzeria

With a large selection of models and solutions available, commercial cold storage options impose a vast set of choices - especially if you are opening a restaurant for the first time. The usefulness of commercial refrigeration in any restaurant is undeniable. However, each restaurant has its own distinct requirements that correlate with the menu's necessary ingredients. Pizza restaurants in particular have a unique need to keep refrigeration as close to preparation areas as possible. These establishments need to quickly assemble menu items in mass quantity, while maintaining uniform taste and presentation.

There are many different factors involved when selecting all of your equipment, but the biggest decision point is often based on available space. Many pizza restaurants operate with smaller kitchen layouts and a minimal crew. To create an efficient floor plan, it is essential to make every inch of your kitchen functional.

Here, we'll take you through the process to help you find the right refrigeration set up that works for your operation's space and menu.



Refrigeration Basics

When selecting any type of refrigeration unit for your restaurant, there are three key features that must always be considered: the compressor, footprint and storage capacity.

Compressor:

Wherever the compressor is located, be sure to leave enough clearance for the compressor to properly take in and push out air. The compressor location will vary between refrigerated units, so it is important to note where the compressor is mounted.

There are benefits to each type of set-up:

- Top-mounted compressors keep generated heat up and away from cold zones, making it a slightly more efficient design.
- Bottom-mounted compressors are easier to load and unload, creating a faster and more user-friendly maintenance routine.
- Side-mounted compressors avoid installation issues for undercounter refrigerators and walk-in coolers.

Footprint:

When accounting for every square inch of available space, keep clearance requirements in mind. The maximum size unit for your restaurant will need to have at least two to three inches of clearance on each side and from the back to the wall to ensure proper air flow and cool refrigeration coils. Obstructions in the airflow will tax the compressor, which can result in burn-out and equipment malfunction.

Storage Capacity:

Look for adjustable shelving options to accommodate changing storage needs. Consider the inventory you plan on storing and look for the dimensions that can fit your space and storage needs.



Prep and Worktop Refrigeration

A pizza shop without a prep table is like a burger joint without a grill. It just won't work. Prep tables offer speed, efficiency and organization for assembling pizzas, sub sandwiches, salads and any other menu items that are on the menu. There are two types of prep tables available: pizza prep tables and sandwich prep tables. A third alternative, the worktop table, is another option for secondary installation, but should not be used primarily for pizza preparation.



So what does each table have to offer?

Let's take a closer look at each type to discern what will work best for your operation.

Pizza Prep Tables

Do you need a pizza prep table? If pizza is your primary menu item, then yes, you do. This is an essential equipment purchase for any successful commercial pizza business. Pizza prep tables are specifically designed to bring convenience, organization and efficiency to pizza kitchens every day.

If your menu serves up more than slices and whole pies, it is beneficial to have more than one prep table. Many small to mid-size kitchens benefit from utilizing the smaller footprint of a sandwich prep table or a worktop refrigerator in their set up. It is important to note that pizza shops should not use sandwich prep tables or worktop refrigerators only, as they do not provide enough storage and space to effectively keep up with busy service.

Notable Features:

- Equipped with a refrigerated base for storage
- Removable cutting board worktop area
- Built-in ingredient rail behind worktop area



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Sandwich Prep Table

Sandwich prep tables are an excellent addition to a set up with a pizza prep table, as they provide a designated area for salads, subs and other non-pizza menu item preparation. Sandwich prep tables are very similar to pizza prep tables. The real difference is in size. The worktop area is typically not as deep or as wide and the overall storage capacity is lower in both the refrigerated cabinets and on the ingredients rail.

Worktop Refrigerators

Worktop refrigerators offer additional refrigerated storage while remaining an integral part of a preparation area.

Notable Features:

- Equipped with a refrigerated base for storage
- Removable cutting board worktop area
- Built-in ingredient rail behind worktop area



How to Select Your Prep Table or Worktop Refrigerator

The first step in selecting the right prep table or worktop refrigerator for your pizzeria is to evaluate the overall available space. Another important consideration to keep in mind is your oven's location. Keep your prep table and worktop stations within steps of the oven, as this assists in speed and efficiency during busy hours of service. When measuring the available prep table space, acknowledge the maximum width and depth that can be accommodated. In this consideration, it is important to note that you will need room for the compressor to breathe and have adequate air flow. You will also need room to maneuver around the table without employees crashing into each other.

Drawers vs. Doors

The refrigerated cabinet area in a prep table is accessed by door or by drawer. Cabinets with doors offer large open spaces, adjustable shelving and versatility in what size products or containers can fit for storage. Drawers offer ease of use, ample storage for hotel pans, third pans and sixth pans and are typically more ergonomic to use and suffer less wear and tear in comparison to doors. Many prep table units are available with a combination of door and drawers in one unit.

So which one do you choose?

Let's take a look at the pros and cons of each:



| Drawers | |
|--|--|
| PROS | CONS |
| Holds a variety of pan sizes | Typically more expensive than door units |
| Easy access without strain | Storage area is not as accessible |
| Stronger durability for excessive opening and closing during service | |

| Doors | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| PROS | CONS |
| The most common type of configuration | Hinges wear quickly if opened and closed consistently on a daily basis |
| Available in a variety of widths | Employee strain from bending down to retrieve stored ingredients |
| Adjustable storage capacity | |

Maintaining Your Prep Table and Worktop Refrigerator

Prep tables are relatively easy to maintain. Implement these following practices as follows to ensure the full-life of your equipment:

Daily

- Remove and clean cutting boards
- Wipe refrigerated cabinet or drawer areas clean before and after service
- Wipe down all exterior surfaces
- Sweep and mop floor area around the table
- Remove all pans from the ingredient rail and store in a designated refrigerated space overnight

Weekly

- Check the compressor for dust or debris, clean as needed
- Inspect door gaskets for energy efficiency
- Check door hinges for signs of wear, replace as needed
- Monitor internal temperatures and note any variations

Monthly or as Needed

- Check with your warranty for recommended service intervals

Cool Tip:

Cover all food items in your fridge. Various pizza toppings can be acidic, like tomatoes, and will corrode the lines over time if left to the open air.

Cool Tip:

Shut a full piece of paper in the door of your refrigeration unit with half of the paper in the refrigerator and half hanging outside. Once the door is shut, pull on the paper. If the paper slips through, it is time to replace the gasket. If the paper remains stuck, your gaskets are sealing properly.

Walk-In Coolers

Walk-In Cooler Basics

Walk-in coolers provide a large refrigerated area for perishable food and beverage inventory that will be used over the course of several days. Pizza restaurant operators typically store dough as well as cases of cheese, meats and vegetables in walk-in coolers. For those shops serving beer, walk-in coolers add a spacious area for keg storage as well.

Do You Need a Walk-In Cooler?

If you store cases of inventory overnight, then it is recommended for you to have a walk-in cooler. These units provide an organized and large storage area for bulk packaging, enabling restaurant owners to receive better deals from distributors by buying larger quantities of stock. A large, but manageable, inventory also ensures that you will not run out of ingredients during operating hours.

Choosing the Right Walk-In Cooler

When searching for the ideal unit, you must first determine the available space and consider the walk in a separate room all to itself.

Measuring

The compressor size and location, as well as the overall size of the unit are important elements to take into account, both with installing a walk-in into an existing building or during the construction phase of a new building. Be sure to take into account that each wall will have about four inches of insulation. This will make the interior dimensions a little smaller than the exterior.

Floors

Walk-in coolers come with or without floors. This is an option that is entirely up to the owner's preference for style and material. Factory floors are typically grooved or textured metal. Some restaurants prefer to install their own tile floors to match the rest of the kitchen for a more uniform finish.

Maintaining Your Walk-In Cooler

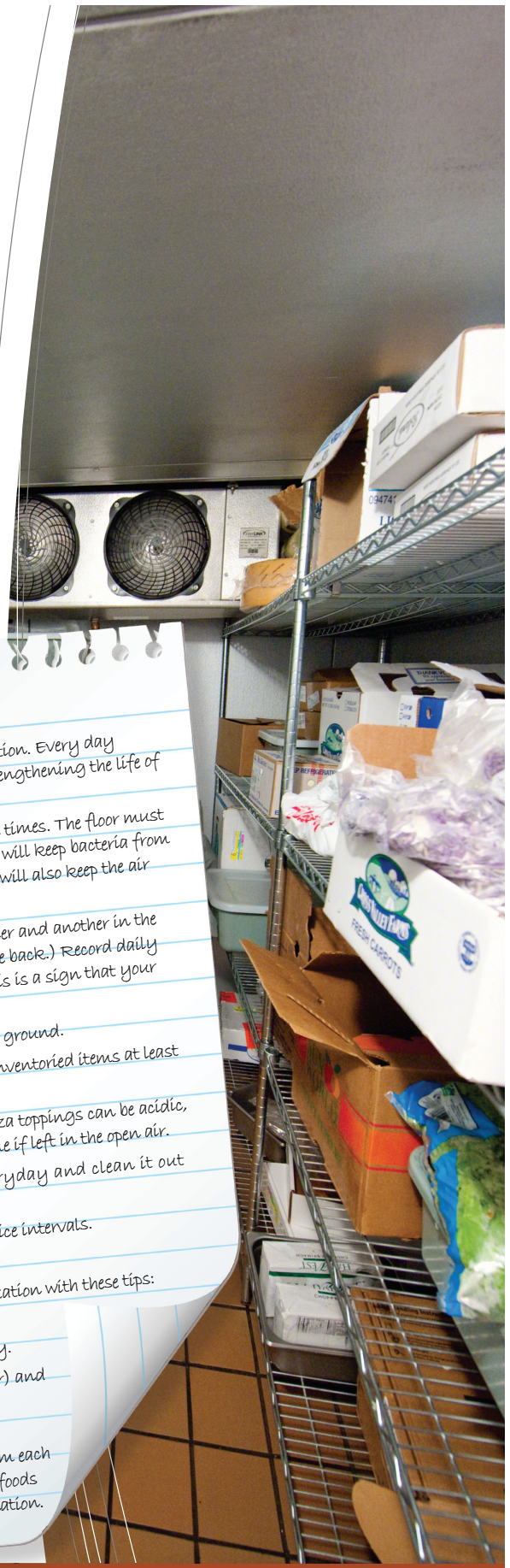
Caring for your walk in is easy, but it does require attention. Every day maintenance and monitoring are key components to strengthening the life of your cooler.

- The floor must be kept clean and free of debris at all times. The floor must also be swept and mopped each day after close. This will keep bacteria from breeding and contaminating your inventory and will also keep the air flow moving freely.
- Place a thermometer in the warmest part of the cooler and another in the coolest part (one near the door and another near the back.) Record daily temperatures and note any major variances as this is a sign that your cooler is not working efficiently.
- Install racks that are at least six inches off of the ground.
- Keep air circulating properly by arranging all inventoried items at least two inches away from each other and the wall.
- Cover all food items in your fridge. Various pizza toppings can be acidic, like tomatoes, and will corrode the lines over time if left in the open air.
- Check the compressor for dust or debris everyday and clean it out once a month.
- Consult your warranty for recommended service intervals.

Best Practices

Arrange your products for efficiency and organization with these tips:

- Label everything and throw out expired or inedible/unsellable products out immediately.
- Put produce near the door (where it is warmer) and meat, fish, poultry and dairy in the back (where it is cooler.)
- Separate raw and ready-to-eat products from each other and keep any potentially hazardous foods on bottom racks to prevent cross-contamination.



Reach-In Freezers

Reach-In Freezer Basics

The majority of pizza restaurants will not need anything larger than a solid one-door freezer. This is an excellent choice for pizzerias buying meat in bulk or offering more than just pizza on the menu. Freezers are perfect for storing meat and poultry for longer than a couple of days.



Do You Need a Freezer?

If you are planning on purchasing bulk amounts of meat or storing any perishable items for longer than a few days, then your establishment will benefit from using a freezer. Many pizzerias who search out great deals on specialty meats or who serve wings or ribs, utilize freezer storage.

Selecting a Freezer for Your Pizza Restaurant

Find the reach-in freezer that works best for your establishment and maximize its lifespan by taking notice of a couple important features: the compressor location and the overall dimensions of the unit.



Maintaining Your Reach-In Freezer

Similar to the walk-in cooler, the overall care for a reach-in freezer requires consistent attention to the machine's overall daily performance. Regular maintenance will lengthen the life of your investment and will keep your food fresh and frozen.

- Check gaskets every week to assure they are sealing when the door closes.
- Monitor the internal temperature on a daily basis. Record any fluctuations in temperature and call for service if temps are dropping below recommended levels.
- Keep the compressor clean and free of debris and dust. Clean the compressor thoroughly at least once each month.
- Stock food for proper internal air circulation and do not jam cases or food items over or atop one another.
- Consult your warranty for recommended service intervals.

Undercounter Refrigeration

Undercounter Refrigeration Basics

Commercial undercounter refrigerators save space in kitchens and bar areas. Designed to fit under most standard 40 inch countertops, undercounter refrigerators are available in a variety of sizes and with a selection of features to meet specific food service needs.

Do You Need an Undercounter Refrigerator?

Undercounter refrigerators should not be used as substitutions for prep tables. The stainless steel tops are not food-grade and raw food will contaminate the surface. These are units that are best used by pizzerias that need just a little additional refrigeration in addition to the prep tables and walk-in coolers. Undercounter refrigerators are perfect for server stations and bar areas.

Maintaining Your Undercounter Refrigerator

Due to its smaller size, the overall maintenance of your undercounter refrigerator is minimal.

- Check the compressor for dust and debris. Clean the compressor out at least once per month.
- Wipe down the interior and exterior of the unit thoroughly every day after close.
- Keep an eye on the interior temperature and call for service if it begins to fall below accepted temperature ranges.
- Consult your warranty for recommended service intervals.

Choosing the Right Undercounter Refrigeration for Your Business

Units are available in one of three configurations: doors, drawers or a combination of the two. Door units will offer more storage space, while drawer units will hold hotel pans or prepared ingredients with a more ergonomic design.

Much like all other refrigeration units, the compressor's location must be considered. Wherever the compressor is mounted, side, rear or front, it will need the proper clearance for sufficient air circulation.



Merchandisers

Merchandisers (also known as display refrigerators) provide a customer incentive for impulse purchasing. Outfitted with a glass door, these units are great for increasing beverage sales or any other quick-sale items for sale in your pizza restaurant.

Do You Need a Merchandiser?

Merchandiser refrigerators are perfect for both behind the bar and front of the house areas. Bar areas can use merchandisers to display available beverages while front of the house merchandisers, whether full-size or countertop units, are accessible for customers to grab desired items for purchase before paying at the counter.



Choosing the Right Merchandiser for Your Business

Available in countertop and floor-size models, merchandisers can be placed behind, on top of or in front of counter areas. The right model for your business should be determined by the available space for installation and the amount of inventory you wish to display. Also, note the compressor location and consider this for proper air circulation when planning for installation.

Maintaining Your Merchandiser

The maintenance of a merchandiser and deli display case is generally simple, as long as it's done on a consistent basis.

- Clean the glass door often and keep free of smudges and fingerprints.
- Wipe down the interior and exterior daily.
- Monitor the compressor and check for any build up of debris or dust. Clean the compressor at least once each month.
- Consult your warranty for recommended service intervals.

Countertop Models

Typically placed near the point of purchase areas, these units encourage last minute impulse buys from customers. Countertop merchandisers are perfect for small pizza restaurants with heavy take-out traffic.



Full-Size Models

These are ideal for businesses that are selling grab-and-go items of various sizes. Pizzerias selling two-liter bottles of soda as well as cans, juice drinks or other smaller sized items will benefit from the larger storage space offered in a full-size unit.



Whether you are outfitting an entire kitchen or adding onto an existing layout it is important to set your pizza business up with equipment that is engineered for success. Store, prepare and display your menu items with consistency and efficiency, equip your kitchen with the right refrigeration equipment and deliver fresh and flavorful ingredients every day.

Top Brand Manufacturers for Pizza Refrigeration

From prep tables to walk-in coolers, FoodServiceWarehouse.com has your pizza restaurant covered. Look for these top brands in each category:

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Turbo air

 **Delfield**

**ARCTIC AIR**

Continental
Refrigerator

**Arctic**[®]

 **Kolpak**

 **Metalfrío**



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