

CARE Connection

Food Purchasing/Procurement Grab and Go Lesson

Purchasing Large Equipment for Child Care II

Purchasing large equipment is an essential task to creating quality meals in most child care facilities. Purchasing equipment requires reviewing available labor, space, current and potential utility cost, and the license capacity of the facility to determine if it is beneficial to purchase large equipment. There are three major groups of large equipment: cooking/food preparation equipment, storage equipment, and cleaning equipment. In this lesson, you will learn about a variety of types and features of large equipment and some common places to purchase large equipment.

Cooking/Food Preparation Equipment

Range Tops and Conventional Ovens

Range tops and conventional ovens are essential pieces of equipment to prepare food in child care facilities. Range tops are used to sauté, pan fry, grill, and reheat food in pots and pans. Range tops require a fire suppression system and a range hood for exhaust ventilation. Prior to purchasing and installing a ventilation/exhaust system, review your local or state building codes. Conventional ovens are commonly used in child care facilities because they can be used for a wide variety of cooking needs, such as baking and broiling.

Conventional ovens and range tops may be electric or gas. Gas equipment still needs electricity for a timer, lights, or a fan, if these are provided. The decision to purchase a gas or an electric model is dependent on several factors. An all-electric kitchen may be cost effective if the total cost is higher to install gas lines in the kitchen. However, in areas where severe storms and loss of power is common, gas equipment may be more practical.

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There are a number of desirable features to look for when shopping for range tops and ovens. The features include the following:

- Individually controlled heating elements or burners
- Automatic pilots on gas ranges
- Replaceable parts
- Availability and frequency of service
- Extra racks for the oven

Microwave Ovens

The power level of the microwave is an important consideration and may not be directly related to the size of the microwave unit. The size of the microwave does not indicate warming abilities. While the size is very important, the output power (watt) has the most significant role. When selecting microwave ovens, determine the facility's needs and how it relates to microwave usage. If a variety of tasks are done on a regular and/or daily basis, purchasing a higher watt microwave oven will be the most cost effective selection.

Examples of microwave power levels and what they may be used for include the following:

- 700 watt for warming
- 1000 watt for heating precooked foods
- 1400-2700 watt for defrosting and reheating larger quantities of food

Worktables

Worktables should be the right height for the employee working at that location. The general rules are the worktable height should be 4" below elbow height. To minimize the need to reach long distances, position the work table within 24-36" of the center of the employee's waistline. Purchase tables made of stainless steel for durability and longevity.

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Mixers

The size of mixers range from 5 quart to 140 quart models. Stainless steel bowls are preferred. The selection of the mixer should be based on the intended use. Common mixer attachments are flat beaters (paddles), wire whips, pastry knives, and dough arms or hooks.

Desirable features for mixers include the following:

- Three or more speeds
- Gear drive
- Manual bowl lift
- The ability to add attachments
- A portable mixer stand

Slicers

Slicers are useful if meat or cheese is purchased in bulk. Slicers produce a more accurate portion size for items that are not pre-sliced or pre-portioned. Slicers are labor saving if you have to slice a large volume of meat, cheese, or vegetables. Compare cost of purchasing pre-portioned items to bulk items before buying a slicer.

Desirable features include the following:

- Easy adjustment to vary thickness of slices
- Stainless steel blade
- Easy disassembly for cleaning
- Protective shield for blade
- Manually operated feed grip
- The ability to raise the slicer for cleaning

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Storage

Freezers/Refrigerators

The types of refrigerated storage will vary with the items on the menu. Purchasing freezers and/or refrigerators should be based on grocery shopping or the delivery schedule of food. Examine the total available space for storage. Based on the available space, determine if it is cost effective to purchase a larger freezer or refrigerator.

Desirable features include the following:

- A condenser that is accessible for cleaning
- Heavy duty adjustable shelving
- One piece molded door gasket for a positive seal
- Durable door hinges, handles, and other hardware
- An interior light
- An exterior mounted built-in thermometer
- Six-inch adjustable legs
- Seamless interior construction

Cleaning

Automatic Dishwashers

Automatic dishwashers are optional, but can be beneficial in some facilities. To determine the need, examine the total labor cost to hand wash dishes and the cost of a dishwasher. When looking for dishwashers, look for the following features.

- Stainless steel interiors
- Prewired
- Factory installed machine mounted control panels
- Exterior thermometer to measure wash and rinse water temperatures
- Automatically timed wash and rinse cycle

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Three Compartment Sinks

All food establishments that do not have an automatic dishwasher must have a sink with at least three compartments for manually washing, rinsing, and sanitizing equipment, utensils, and tableware. The sink compartments must be large enough to accommodate large cooking equipment and utensils, such as pots and pans. Hand washing sinks are required in the food production area – check with your local food protection agency for additional information.

Large Equipment Needs

All equipment should have a seal of approval from the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF), the American Gas Association (AGA), or the Underwriters Laboratory (UL). Refer to the checklist at <http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20111128121423.pdf> for additional information on purchasing equipment.

Refer to the Food Service Equipment Needs chart below to determine specific equipment needs for your facility.

| Food Service Equipment Needs | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| Equipment | Number of Children | | | |
| | 1-50 | 51-100 | 101-200 | 201-300 |
| Range with ventilating hood | 1 range with oven; 30” domestic or 30” - 36” commercial (2 burners) | 1 range with oven 30” - 36” commercial (4 burners) | 1 range with oven 30” - 36” commercial (2 if over 150 children) (6 burners) | 2 ranges with ovens 30” - 36” commercial or 1 range w/oven 60” or larger commercial (8 burners) |

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| Food Service Equipment Needs | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| Refrigerator with shelves | single section domestic 18 cu. ft. or commercial reach-in 20-25 cu. ft. | double section commercial reach-in 40-50 cu. ft. | double section commercial reach-in 50-60 cu. ft. or 64 sq. ft. (8 ft. x 8 ft.) walk-in | triple section commercial reach-in 60-75 cu. ft. or 64 sq. ft. (8 ft. x 8 ft.) walk-in |
| Freezer | same as refrigerator | same as refrigerator | same as refrigerator | same as refrigerator |
| Work Tables (Allow 4 linear ft. per worker). Use countertops as tables | 1 table | 2 tables | 3 tables | 4 tables |
| Sink with separate hand sink | 1 sink - 3 compartments | 1 sink - 3 compartments | 1 sink - 3 compartments | 1 sink - 3 compartments |

Equipment purchasing and facility design for school nutrition programs. Checklist for assessing large equipment needs. Retrieved from <http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20111128121423.pdf>

If the facility will serve over 100 children, the following equipment is recommended to supplement the minimum items listed above:

- Steam equipment (kettle, steamer)
- Hot food holding cabinet
- Convection oven
- Electric food slicer
- Mixer with attachments (vegetable slicer/shredder, meat and food chopper)

(USDA Food and Nutrition Service SFSP, 2012)

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Large Equipment Needs

There are several resources for purchasing equipment. As a participant of the CACFP, start with your state agency for purchasing large equipment. They provide technical assistance through visits, phone calls, or email. Also contact equipment suppliers, utility companies, architects, and food facility consultants (a fee may be associated with this service).

Other available options include the following resources.

- The **Internet** is a great source to find equipment. The Internet provides the opportunity to compare prices on equipment without the pressures of a salesman. They are commonly called e-dealers. Verify that the dealer is a reputable business prior to making purchases from the Internet.
- **Full-service equipment and supply dealers** sell a broad range of equipment from several manufacturers. They have a full line of services that include installation, repairs, quotes, and equipment training.
- **Visit local equipment vendors and dealers' showrooms** to view available equipment. They often sell to local restaurants or schools and will have equipment available onsite.
- **Wholesale stores** sell commercial grade equipment, but often choices are limited.
- Contact the **School Nutrition Director** within your local school district.
- **Utility companies** sell gas or electric ranges and other equipment.

Purchasing large equipment is an investment in your business. Contact your state agency or sponsoring organization for additional guidance.

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References:

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