

3 Ways to Improve Food Safety and Cut Labor Costs



Wait, did you just read that right? Yes, there are things that can be done for this win-win. Improve operations, profitability and keep the Health Department at bay (well, to a certain degree 😊). It all comes down to taking a hard look at what is already going on in your establishment and knowing where to find some common hidden costs.

Certified Commercial vs. Commercial-Style or Equipment Made for Home Use

Inexpensive equipment may seem like a great deal upfront, but these could ultimately wind up costing you more money due to inefficiency, replacement, labor clean-up and/or waste. Always look for a commercial product certification. This applies to everything from cooking and cleaning equipment to tables and tools. Products with these certifications have been built to established standards, are designed for cleanability *and* their production facilities are inspected to ensure product consistency. These certifications mean that you will have equipment that will stand up to the rigors of day-to-day use and be properly designed for sanitation. There are a couple of certifying entities in North America.

Always look for these stickers (listed below) on equipment or look for these marks on the equipment documentation. This simple action will pay for itself in the long run!

- **NSF (National Sanitation Foundation)**



- **Canadian Standards Association (CSA-Sanitation)**



- **Underwriters Laboratories (UL-EPH)**



- **Edison Testing Laboratories (ETL Intertek-Sanitation)**



Warewashing

Another way to significantly impact labor costs is to use mechanical warewashing instead of the tried-and-true 3-compartment sink and elbow grease. Labor savings can be significant. Generally

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speaking, the higher the volume of service you have, the larger return you will see in a mechanical warewasher. With an average cycle time between 90 seconds and 4 minutes, (depending upon desired settings), some estimates put the overall labor savings anywhere from 50% to 80%. How fast can one of your staff handwash a batch of utensils?

Of course, you will still need someone to do the dishes. However, with time savings from warewashing, you can move previously dedicated staff from manning the station for the vast majority of their shift to other duties in the back of the house (i.e. food prep, cleaning, stocking, etc.). Additionally, with the ease of use, you could task another employee at will to run the dishes when needed. Both tactics can save you back-of-the-house labor.

Other important factors to consider when deciding if warewashing equipment is a smart choice are the upfront cost of the machine and available space. And, unfortunately, you cannot completely remove the 3-compartment sink from the facility - that piece of equipment is still required and comes in handy during emergencies or times of high volume to handle overflow. Additionally, there are many types of mechanical warewashers on the market (High Temp, Chemical, gas, electric, undercounter, Cabinet style, conveyor, etc.). Choosing the best one for your establishment depends on the unique aspects of your business. Enlist a professional to help you choose what works best for your business.

Minimize Cleaning Time

If your establishment generally does not have heavy soilage on work surfaces or equipment, then it makes sense to transition to something more flexible and easier to use. Implementing a Spray and Wipe Program for work surfaces (table tops and clean-in-place equipment) is the perfect solution. The time savings are substantial: No more filling and dumping buckets multiple times a shift. No more sanitizer bucket and cloth maintaining at all times. No changing and making sanitizer every 2 hours to keep the concentration correct. No more drenching surfaces and then taking forever for them to air dry. No more potential chemical contamination issues with food or food contact surfaces.

In essence, you simply fill a spray bottle with cleaner, another spray bottle with water and a third spray bottle with sanitizer. Be sure that the bottles are always properly labeled! Then you use the desired utensil to clean (scrub brush, cloth towel or a paper towel). Generally, sanitizer concentration will remain for a period of 24 hours. And by using spray bottles, you gain a more efficient spread of detergent and sanitizer thereby making your cleaning solution(s) last longer.