

Commercial Refrigerators Buying Guide

Commercial refrigerators, which are also referred to as restaurant refrigerators, offer foodservice operators a wide variety of features for holding and storing food and ingredients.

Typically constructed of stainless steel or aluminum and certified to NSF 7 requirements, restaurant refrigerators are far superior to residential models for professional foodservice applications. Their heavier-duty compressors stand up to the heat in commercial kitchens, and interior cavities and shelving are easy to clean. Holding temperatures usually range from 27 to 40 degrees F. Many commercial refrigerators are Energy Star-rated and use environmentally friendly, CFC-free refrigerants.

Other features available on some commercial refrigerators include door locks and pass-through capabilities. Door locks keep stored food secure during off hours and are especially useful in the corrections market to keep inmates out. Pass-through refrigerators come equipped with doors on both the front and the back, allowing dual access in the kitchen or use as a holding cabinet.

Brands: Arctic Air; Beverage Air; Delfield; F.W.E.; LaRosa; True Manufacturing; Turbo Air; Victory;

Configuration: Reach-in; Under counter.

Reach-in restaurant refrigerators are most commonly used in the back of the house and provide ample space for storing food and ingredients. Under counter refrigerators, which are especially popular for use behind the bar or for counterservice applications, can be used to conveniently locate ingredients and supplies right at the prep line or service area.

Type: Back-of-house; Merchandiser; Behind-the-bar

The majority of restaurant refrigerators are back-of-house units, designed to be kept in the kitchen and out of sight of customers. They typically feature an aluminum or stainless-steel construction for durability. Merchandiser refrigerators typically have glass doors that either swing or slide open and can be stationed in full view of clientele to encourage additional purchases. Behind-the-bar refrigerators are often under counter units and are designed to keep bar fare easily accessible for fast turnarounds. Many are available with glass doors to display products; some have decorative or painted steel doors to add a design element.

Capacity: Ranges from 8 to 72 cubic feet

Commercial refrigerators should be sized based on where and how they will be used.

Compressor Mount: Top; bottom

The compressor on a commercial refrigerator is located either at the top or the bottom of the unit. Refrigerators with top-mounted compressors may require additional headspace and are more difficult to service because of their height. Bottom-mounted units ease maintenance, as they make the compressor easier to reach. However, this also puts the

compressor in a place where it's more subject to dirt and abuse, which may add to maintenance requirements.

Controls: Digital; Analog

An increasing number of restaurant refrigerators are equipped with digital controls. These controls allow operators to precisely set the holding temperature inside the cavity. They also may offer diagnostic capabilities and alarms that sound if a door is left open for a designated amount of time.

Door Type: Swing; Sliding

Commercial refrigerators are equipped with either swing-open or sliding doors. Swing-open doors are designed to open up to 120 degrees, and some have a stay-open feature to ease restocking. However, swing-open doors can also block walkway access. Sliding doors are a good solution where space is limited; their limitation is that only one side of the refrigerator can be accessed at a time.