

## Designing a new deli

Mon, 2012-07-02 13:48

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A deli station can provide options for many different types of customers: picky eaters who consider sandwiches a “safe” choice, vegetarians and vegans who are looking for a break from the pasta or salad bar and others who may fancy themselves sandwich creators!

A deli station allows operators to offer a fresh, made-to-order station with a wide variety of ingredients that can be combined in infinite ways. It is also one that can be staffed with workers with minimal culinary skills (i.e. students) and kept open for nearly all day parts, including late night.

Whether it's a basic set up similar to Subway or a more elaborate one—like a New York-style operation—customers from college students to busy executives gravitate to this concept when other options may not be appealing or when they have a hankering for a made-to-order sandwich.

When it comes to designing and specifying equipment for one, consider these questions:

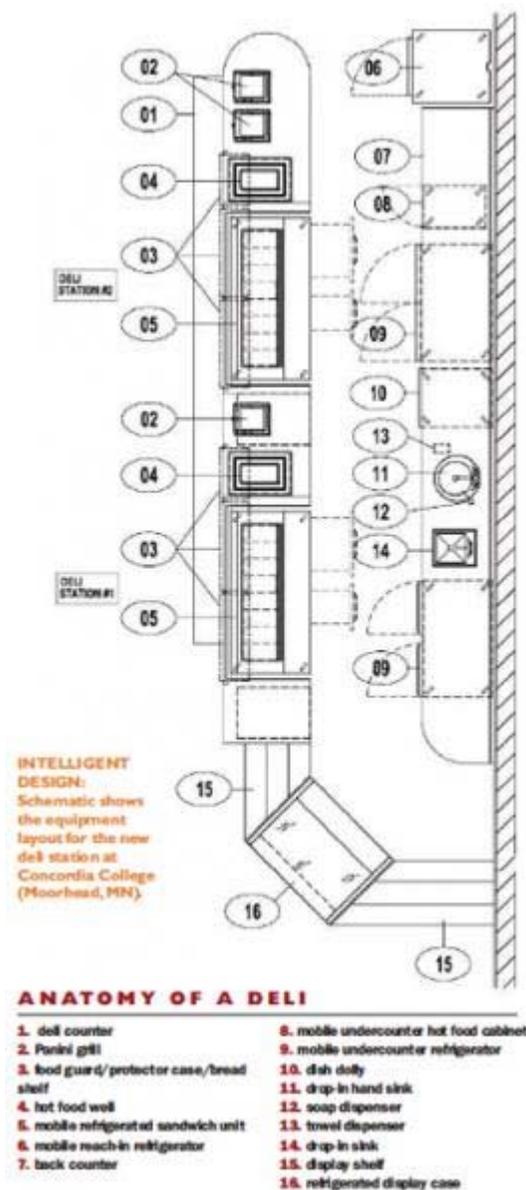
- How will sandwiches will be prepared and assembled?
- What speed of service/volume production will be needed?
- What percentage of sales will be pre-made versus made-to-order sandwiches and what types of merchandising will be needed to maintain that ratio?

It's also important to consider where a deli station will be located in a servery. For example, if located next to a bakery station, the breads used in the deli could be baked off there, creating that irresistible aroma of just-baked bread. (Subway and Jimmy John's have mastered this technique). The deli station could be co-located adjacent to a grill area where hot specialty sandwich ingredients such as roast beef, turkey, etc. could be prepared and readily available. Another advantage of co-locating a deli adjacent to a compatible station is the ability to share labor during off-peak periods.

It is crucial to define your deli station concept before selecting and laying out the equipment. If grab-and-go sandwiches will be a main offering, an attractive refrigerated display case should be specified and designed into the station space. It's also important to build flexibility into any station so that different menu items and/or concepts can be added easily at a later date without significant cost investment.

### Menu Options

A sandwich starts with the choice of bread, usually displayed in a case, on bread shelves or on counter



top space in nice baskets. Customers generally like to have a variety of familiar and specialty breads to choose from: white and wheat along with rye, sourdough, pumpernickel, pitas and more. Rolls such as subs, bagels, baguettes and ciabatta and focaccia are often offered, with plain and flavored wraps rounding out these selections.

For meats, the typical deli station offers favorites such as ham, turkey, roast beef, pastrami, bologna and other cold cuts along with protein salads such as chicken, tuna, seafood, etc. Some operators prefer to order their deli meats pre-sliced while others like to enhance the perception of freshness by slicing meats on site at the deli station. When that is the goal, some operators also display "take home" hams, roasts and similar items, as you would find in a grocery store.

## Read more on equipping deli stations

Other items typically available include a wide variety of toppings (lettuce, tomato, pickles, black olives, a variety of raw and pickled peppers, onions, etc.), sliced cheeses (American, muenster, pepper jack, Swiss, Colby) and sauces (mayonnaise and its vegetarian equivalents), a variety of mustards, oil and vinegar and dressings (ranch, Thousand Island, etc.). The type of and number of ingredients offered should be determined in advance as this will affect the size of the required prep station.

Some delis also offer sides like chips, cold salads and/or soup (either self-serve or served). Space must be allocated and the appropriate equipment specified for such options.

### Equipping a deli station

Refrigerated sandwich prep units typically come in one-, two- or three-section lengths with integral cold pan sections. These display ingredients and are used for the assembly of sandwiches. The top openings range from a quantity of eight to thirty, 1/6 size pans. Under-counter refrigeration compartments can be specified with doors or drawers to provide additional storage so ingredients can be replenished as needed. Specify casters on these units for easy removal and cleaning.

A refrigerated display case with self-service as well as attended service sections lets operators display pre-made sandwiches. These are typically located at the beginning of station where guests can select items without having to wait in line. Pay close attention to such merchandising options as they will have a great impact on projecting a fresh image for the station.

There are several ways to heat up or toast a sandwich. A microwave convection oven is a great tool for pre-marked panini sandwiches. These ovens combine impinged air and radiant heat with microwave energy to rapidly cook or heat food without compromising quality. An integral catalytic converter allows for UL-certified, ventless operation and is an attractive option for operators with limited exhaust facilities.

Conveyor toasters are another popular option. Specify a model that also can accommodate larger breads, like bagels.

A hot well may be included for hot items like meatballs, Buffalo chicken etc. Various sizes can be dropped into the service counter and integrate with the sandwich assembly process. Heated under-counter cabinets are also important for replenishing hot sandwich ingredients.

Nice-to-have-but-not-essential equipment might include a carving station, a grill and a fryer.

Most of this equipment is electric and "plug and play." Refrigerated prep tables are typically designed to slide into a lined opening of a millwork counter with the top of the unit flush with the height of the counter top. Protector cases in front of the prep tables are required by code. Exhaust ventilators for cooking equipment such as a grill or a fryer are required.

## Operational Issues

Deli stations offer familiar menu items, but yours will vary depending on the demographic mix of customers and the region. Research customer preferences in advance of design work. For example, a high number of vegetarian/vegan customers may call for a wide selection of hummus, portobello mushrooms, tofu and other soy-based products.

The cost to add a fully equipped deli station will be about \$85,000, a good investment considering the wide range of menu choices such a station can generate.

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**Source URL:** <http://food-management.com/equipment-amp-technology/designing-new-deli>



**EQUIPMENT**

**ESSENTIAL ESSENTIALS**

- ✓ Refrigerated Sandwich Prep Table (\$3,000-\$5,000)
- ✓ Undercounter Refrigerator (\$2,000-\$7,000)
- ✓ Microwave Convection Oven (\$8,000-\$10,000)
- ✓ Conveyor Oven (\$6,000-\$9,000)
- ✓ Undercounter Heated Cabinets (\$3,000-\$4,000)
- ✓ Refrigerated/Ambient Display Case (\$10,000-\$20,000)
- ✓ Utility Sink (\$700-\$1,200)
- ✓ Hand Sink (\$700-\$1,200)
- ✓ Hot Well (\$2,000-\$3,000)

**OPTIONAL**

- ✓ Exhaust ventilator with fire protection system – varies with size of cooling line (approximately 10' long with MUA) (\$10,000-\$15,000)
- ✓ Fryer with filter (2 fryers with heated dump, \$13,000-\$28,000)
- ✓ Reach in refrigerator (\$7,000-\$12,000)
- ✓ Slicer (\$1,500-\$3,500)
- ✓ Cold Well (\$2,000-\$3,000)