

Unit 8: Video Transcript

Welcome back! It's time for the segment of the show we call "Ask the expert." With us today is an expert from Syscove, the systems and services company — which does everything from distribution of food and related products to kitchen and restaurant design. Today we'll talk about "Best Practices" for designing a kitchen and dining area.

We're pleased to have you here today.

Glad to be here.

So, for our viewers, can you give us a quick rundown of your operation?

Sure. My company does kitchen and restaurant design for nursing homes and hospitals to cruise ships and sport parks. We'll design for, basically, — well, wherever a meal is prepared away from home— any commercial kitchen. We always say "Our customer's success is our success," for we're only successful if we help them be successful.

Great motto. When contractors are asked to design a "home" kitchen, best practices include a close proximity to the sink, stove and refrigerator, which is known as the triangle. Is this important to design a kitchen for commercial use or is there a difference?

Oh yeah, quite a difference. When designing a commercial kitchen, you don't really need the prep sink over by where you are actually doing the cooking. A prep sink would be over by the part of the kitchen where most of the prep work is done. You'd want it by the walk-in cooler and freezer. Over near the area where the actual meal service cooking is taking place is where you need to have a hand sink, a refrigerator and potable ...um filtered , water supply for cooking.

What specific criteria would you want to remind someone to include when designing a kitchen and dining area that is for a large group of people, who seek a personal setting?

Well for the kitchen, I'd say that you need an ample stove, an open burner for sauté work, and of course enough refrigeration space. Also, don't forget a convection or combination oven. Equipment would be decided by the menu and the number of customers who would be served during meal service.

Oh yeah, let's not forget, you also need to design the work and traffic flow in the kitchen. You don't want the chef tripping over the prep folks, or your servers constantly colliding with the kitchen staff. It would make for a very dangerous, — and messy kitchen!

(chuckle). Okay, how about for the dining area?

The design and layout of the dining room would be as - if not more important than the kitchen. Stuff you'd have to think about would be — um, the lighting, the carpeting, eh, acoustics are important for noise levels. You'd want some dividers and plants to create an, um, intimate atmosphere for diners. You want comfortable chairs and ample-sized tables. China, glassware and flatware and other table-top things. Ample restrooms. Okay, you probably want to get an interior designer to help plan the dining room.

Would there be any criteria that is essential to designing a kitchen and dining room that is required in the industry?

You have to, I mean have to, know the local building codes and requirements. HACCP compliance and sanitation requirements, hand sinks, pot sinks, washing space, and so on. You have to get the utilities right – natural gas, electric, propane and water... Traffic flow for both the dining room and kitchen... Oh, and never begin a construction or renovation project until you have the buy-in of the local code enforcement. You have to get the approval of the building inspector— try to get it in writing upfront and then signed by all parties involved.

You've learned this from experience?

Oh yeah — the hard way, more than once. (chuckle)

What food service equipment items in this list would be essential to actual design of the facility? Refrigerated storage equipment, ranges, ovens, tilting braising pans, steam cooking equipment, broilers, deep fryers, mixers, cutters, choppers, dishwashing machines and prep areas.

You'd decide the equipment based on the menu. Everything you mentioned are found in most food service establishments. Additional things could be, uh, microwave ovens, coffee makers, flat top grills, display cases, bar equipment, function room equipment like heated food storage cabinets, and so on. Equipment would be based on the size of the place, and would be picked to meet food safety standards... and of course provide guests with the best possible food quality and service.

In your opinion, which three kitchen design factors would be most important to the process? Cost, menu, food quality, food quantity, equipment, utilities, space, type of service and sanitation and safety.

I'd say one, Cost – you need to have a budget and stick to it. You design and build based on what the place can afford. Second, you need a Menu upfront – the menu will dictate what you need for equipment, food, staffing, dining room needs, utilities, and so on. Third, you need to know the Clientele — um, what type of customer, and what level of service. There's a lot of difference between upscale fine dining and an all you can eat buffet.

Well, looks like we're about out of time. We want to thank our guest for being here and answering our questions.

My pleasure!