

AN ARISTA BUYERS GUIDE

**THE NEW YORK CITY
RESTAURANT
OWNER'S GUIDE
TO CHOOSING AN
HVAC COMPANY**

**SECRETS TO GETTING
THE FAST & RELIABLE
SERVICE YOU NEED**



ARISTA



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If you're in the food service business, you know that maintaining comfortable conditions in your restaurant is a must.

It's never okay to allow your dining room to become too hot, cold or humid. You also can't have too much equipment noise disturbing your customers. Then there's the problem of drafty conditions or even kitchen smells being pulled into the dining room by a poorly-functioning restaurant HVAC system. Any of these problems can cause you to lose customers and impact your bottom line.

Restaurant HVAC is a mission-critical system, and when something goes wrong, you need it taken care of immediately.

If your current service provider makes you wait days for a repair, sends technicians that can't fix the problem, or problems keep coming back, it's time to cut your losses and find a better option. But choosing the right one can be tricky.

Why Restaurant HVAC Is So Challenging

Keeping your restaurant consistently comfortable can be more difficult than for other types of businesses. You have varying numbers of people in the space throughout the day, you have doors opening and closing all day long (letting all your conditioned air escape), and you have kitchen appliances adding heat into the space and exhaust sucking air out of your space. It's a complex problem with many variables, and it takes training and experience to get it right.

Restaurants also have different acoustical requirements than other types of businesses. Nobody wants a noisy restaurant HVAC fan blaring nearby while they are trying to enjoy a meal, yet fans are necessary for a number of reasons. They add conditioned air where it's needed, and they help maintain the proper air balance to prevent migrating odors. The trick is understanding how to position ducts and fans, and run them at the right speeds so they won't disturb patrons.

You've also got other equipment that impacts the operation of your restaurant HVAC: your refrigeration equipment. Walk-in





coolers, low boys, blast chillers and freezers put out a lot of heat that can wreak havoc on the operation of your HVAC system. And the reverse is also true: if your restaurant HVAC isn't working as it should, it can affect the temperatures inside your refrigeration equipment. And that can be a recipe for disaster: it can endanger your health inspection status and even the health of your customers.

It's important that you choose a service provider for your restaurant HVAC that understands the conditions you work in and how to design and maintain your system accordingly.

Here are some proven tips & advice about choosing a new HVAC company for your restaurant.

9 Essential Qualities To Look For In A Restaurant HVAC Company

So how can you tell if a heating and air conditioning company has what it takes to install, repair and maintain restaurant HVAC equipment? Look for the following signs of expertise and commitment to customer service:

1 Experience with restaurant HVAC

A great way to get started is to ask colleagues in the restaurant business (especially in your neighborhood) who does their restaurant HVAC work. It's a good sign when you see the company's trucks around your area frequently; if your neighbors are calling them back again and again, they're probably doing good work.

You should also check into the company's expertise with the latest HVAC technology and controls, such as VRF systems. These efficient and customizable systems are particularly good options for restaurants.

Before you hire anyone, make sure they can demonstrate a history of successfully working with restaurant HVAC systems. Don't just take their word for it: ask for references from satisfied restaurant owners and managers. When you call those references, ask how long the company has been working for them and what type of service they performed.





Ideally, you want to hear about installations, ventilation design, preventative maintenance, and repairs.

2 Refrigeration & kitchen expertise

Did you know that some restaurant HVAC companies also have expertise in refrigeration repair and maintenance as well? There are several reasons you're better off with the one service provider handling your restaurant HVAC and your refrigeration needs:

- A single provider is better able to evaluate the impact of all your systems on one another. Here's an example: if your AC is not maintaining the set temperature, your open air cases may be running constantly as they actually attempt to cool the surrounding space. You need someone with an eye on the big picture.
- You get one trusted point of contact that understands your equipment, your business and your needs.
- One provider means less paperwork with combined work orders and billing.

EVEN BETTER: look for a restaurant HVAC company that repairs and maintains kitchen equipment.

You're probably familiar with maintenance agreements for HVAC, but here's a great source of information if you're new to refrigeration maintenance plans: [Refrigeration Preventive Maintenance Contracts: How to Find the Right One for Your Food Service Operation.](#)

3 Prompt and reliable

It's a good sign when the restaurant HVAC company's sales rep shows up when expected to look at your equipment. But you want to find out more about the company's reliability. Promises about response time are all well and good, but you want to know how well they keep those promises. When you speak to their references, ask how long it takes to get a technician there in an emergency and their track record for arriving on time for appointments.





4 Technicians are certified and well trained

Check out not only the company's credentials, but the certifications technicians hold and the level of training they receive:

- Make sure all technicians are licensed if required in your state.
- Especially in states like New York that do not require licenses, look for MSCA or NATE certifications, which prove that a tech has completed a rigorous training program, passed certification exams, and received ongoing education.
- Ask if the company has design engineers on staff to validate all aspects of HVAC system installation plans.
- Ask about EPA 608 certification, which is required for any tech who handles refrigerant.
- Find out what kind of training the company provides for its employees. When an HVAC company invests in regular training, it shows a level of commitment to quality and customer service.

5 Knowledge of NYC building codes

The last thing you want is an HVAC company that doesn't understand the complex regulations that apply to your food service business. You'll be the one responsible when they get it wrong.

6 They guarantee their work

Here's another sign of a commitment to quality. A restaurant HVAC company should guarantee their installations, repairs and maintenance work for a period of one year.

7 Access to parts

A quick response time is not always an indicator of how fast you'll be back up and running. What if it takes 3 days to get the parts to complete a repair? Look for a service provider that has a large inventory of parts, as well as relationships with numerous parts suppliers in your area.





8 They maintain the equipment they sell and install

Stay away from restaurant HVAC companies that only want to sell you equipment and install it, then walk away. Instead, choose a company that will take responsibility for ongoing maintenance. That way you can be more confident that the installation was done right.

Speaking of preventative maintenance: how often you do it is just as important as who you choose. Regular maintenance of your restaurant HVAC system and your refrigeration equipment keeps your equipment running efficiently and reliably and keeps your repair expenses down. The right provider can work with you to come up with a maintenance schedule based on your equipment and usage, and pricing that works for your budget.

9 Commitment to getting the job done... fast

When you're seeking out an HVAC company for your restaurant, there's another quality that can't be overlooked: a willingness and ability to do whatever is necessary to deliver on their commitments, particularly when it comes to the schedule.

The problem is, how can you tell if a potential vendor will really keep their promises for your HVAC system installation? Guarantees from sales people when they are trying to win your business can sometimes turn into excuses for not delivering on time when the unexpected happens.

Here's the secret to finding out how a company really operates. Speak to a long-time company employee and ask them to tell you about situations when they provided great customer service. Any field tech who has been with the company for a while should not have to think too hard to come up with an example. If customer service is truly a company value, their actions should reflect that on a regular basis.

To show you what we're talking about, here is an Arista story that speaks to our ability to think outside the box and our willingness to go the extra mile to deliver on our commitments.





An HVAC System Installation Story: Equipment Delays Threaten a High Profile Restaurant Opening

When a high profile restaurant in Manhattan was slated to close for a major renovation, the schedule was challenging (to say the least!): everything had to be completed in one week. To add to the pressure, a grand-reopening was planned with media coverage and a tour of the new space. There was no postponing that event, so no excuse could delay the project.

Arista was brought in to complete the HVAC system installation for a brand new, state of the art system. We were given 3 days to get the old system out and the new HVAC system installation completed and running in time for the tour, and so the renovation schedule could stay on track.

So we developed a plan to do just that. We'd remove the old system on a Friday, do the new HVAC system installation on Monday and have a day to configure and test the new equipment on Tuesday. Perfect.

It would have been perfect... but then we got a call from the equipment manufacturer. They informed us that the equipment would be delayed by 2 weeks! Well, that just blew the plan right out of the water. What to do now? We knew we couldn't let this unforeseen problem delay the restaurant opening.

What happened next involved a lot of negotiating, strategizing, pleading... we even offered to send our own trucks to retrieve the equipment from the manufacturer. We're nothing if not determined here at Arista; we simply refused to take no for an answer. Finally, we did get the manufacturer to come through, but we would not have the equipment until late on Monday. So that gave us just one day to get the new HVAC system installation done, configured and tested.

To do that, we were going to have to work fast and come up with ways to cut time out of the schedule.

We started at 5:00am on Tuesday morning and immediately hit a snag: it looked like it would take hours to move all the pieces of the huge new system into the mechanical room. Then our field supervisor had an idea: there was a shortcut we could take, but it meant convincing the Building Engineer of this prestigious building to let us move equipment the size of a school bus through their conference space. We promised him we could have it in and out in 30 seconds.

The Building Engineer laughed at us! We were talking about an air conditioning coil that was 8 feet long, 4 feet wide, and weighed at least 1000 pounds. He wanted to see us do it, and so he agreed. So we staged the plan in the service area, used Masonite to protect the space, and we were in and out in under 30 seconds!

After accomplishing that feat of superhuman strength, we were pumped, and we had the entire unit back together and running by 11:00am. Even our company president was amazed! The restaurant tour went on as planned at 2:00pm with the air conditioning running and the space cool and comfortable.

The Moral of the Story

That's just one of many stories we could tell you, because that's the way we do business. At any point in that story, we could have thrown in the towel and blamed the manufacturer for the delay. But no matter who was to blame, the result would have been the same for our customer: lost business. And we were not going to let that happen.

Here's moral of the story: choose an HVAC system installation company for your restaurant that cares about making sure you get the outcome you want, need and expect.



ABOUT ARISTA

Whether you're responsible for the installation of a new HVAC system or inherited legacy equipment, Arista has the experience to service and maintain any system throughout its lifecycle. Across the tri-state area, we're recognized as one of the region's most respected and referred HVAC experts. When you purchase a preventive maintenance service agreement from Arista, you're backed by an industry leader with that has earned its reputation through decades of trustworthy business conduct and quality service.



Peace of mind at a fair price

Your account is managed by a senior Arista technician and backed by an expert staff of over 170 highly trained professionals. Arista boasts a comprehensive program of continuous staff training and professional development on state-of-the-art practices and processes.

Arista clients also enjoy these benefits:

- Quick-to-respond, accessible workforce and a fleet of 100+ vehicles
- 24/7 emergency standby service
- 30,000 sq. ft. corporate warehouse facility stocked with over 55,000 parts
- Industry recognition as the only New York state company to earn both the prestigious MSCA STAR and GreenStar designations
- LEED Accredited Professionals to assist in making smarter HVAC choices

Questions? Call Arista today.

We hope you've found this guide to be a handy reference. We invite you to call us for a quote on your equipment purchase or service needs. We think you'll agree that hearing what we have to say will be one of the best decisions you make in researching HVAC service providers. Reach an Arista HVAC specialist today at 718-937-4001 or email info@aristair.com.



