
HOW

Freshly Prepared Foods Help Food Retailers

EXCEL





Finding ways to differentiate your business is difficult in any industry — and in the heavily populated food retail space, it's quite important. While customer service and prices will always be points of comparison, a big part of what brings shoppers back to grocery stores and other food retail shops are the types of products offered, as well as how accessible they are.

In recent years, freshly prepared foods have made a name for themselves as a differentiator. From ready-to-eat deli sandwiches and salads to pre-packaged roasted chickens and pastas, food retailers have stocked their shelves with fast and simple meals that cater to the needs of customers (especially the Gen Z market) — whether they're squeezing in lunch between work meetings or picking up a quick dinner in between errands. Paying attention to Gen Z should be a point of emphasis, as they make up a significant portion of the market spend and will become a major force very soon.

As we look at the evolution of freshly prepared foods and reasons for their rise in popularity, the right display fixtures will help retailers successfully promote and sell their valuable products.



The Age of the “Grocerant”

What do a grocery store and a restaurant have in common?
If you were to have asked this question several years ago versus today, odds are the answer would vary quite a bit.

Grocery stores (and convenience stores) were once thought of as places where consumers could go and buy ingredients to make meals at home. If they didn't have enough time to make a meal at home, they could call up a local restaurant and place a to-go order.

While these two worlds were once separate, grocery stores are starting to mirror the restaurant experience — hence, the term *grocerant*. In combination with the standard grocery store haul, consumers now have access to freshly prepared foods that mimic dishes served in restaurants. The result is a one-stop shopping experience, where individuals can pick up all the items on their grocery list, plus have a grab-and-go lunch or pre-made dinner to bring home.

As research shows, consumer buying habits support the transition from traditional food retail stores to the grocerant style. **According to a 2019 Retail Foodservice Consumer Trend Report, 66% of consumers reported purchasing prepared food from retailers at least three times per month.** That's a steady influx of sales for retailers and more incentive for customers to return to the store for future needs.



What Has Prompted This Shift?

Consumer behavior has always been a driving force behind how food retailers position their business. When we consider some of the recent trends to emerge in the food retail industry, it's easy to see why there is a push to blur the lines between grocery stores and restaurants.

Consumers Crave Convenience

Automated bill payments. Robotic vacuum cleaners. Smart coffee makers. While convenience will come in many forms, our culture seems to be built on the idea of trying to do more in less time. This can be attributed to the increasingly busy lives that individuals lead, along with the advent of products and services that coincide with these demands.

While online grocery shopping services offer convenience to customers, it has become just as important that the products themselves are designed with convenience in mind. With little time for consumers to shop for groceries, it's likely that there's little time for them to meal prep as well. Stocking shelves with freshly prepared foods ensures convenience for customers both inside and outside the store.



83%

of shoppers report that convenience while shopping is more important today than it was five years ago.



Consumers Want Healthier Options

Collectively, consumers have become a more health-conscious audience. Influenced by the widespread research and digital content around health and wellness, customers are on the lookout for healthier food options — and they are willing to pay more for them.

While this speaks to the “non-GMO” or “fat-free” items on store shelves, it also applies to the freshly prepared foods. Alongside heartier dishes that include fresh ingredients and sustainably raised products, consumers also want to see healthy, creative options like veggie noodles and salad kits. This level of variety coincides with the understanding that a healthy lifestyle is built around balance. Consumers can have access to the healthier offerings they prefer on a more regular basis, and the more indulgent items for special occasions.



43%

of consumers always look for
healthy options when grocery shopping.
52% sometimes do.





The Presentation of Freshly Prepared Foods

Making freshly prepared foods available to shoppers lays the foundation for a competitive edge. There's another piece to the puzzle, though: how retailers present these products. This plays a vital role in not only the accessibility of grab-and-go products, but also their perceived quality.

Location, Location, Location

Knowing that consumers have a clear interest in freshly prepared foods and are strapped for time, it is more important than ever that the layout of a grocery store reflects this knowledge. Refrigerated display cases that include grab-and-go items should be placed in a prominent location, perhaps near the front of the store or at an aisle entrance. That way, customers can easily see and know where to find freshly prepared foods. (If refrigerated convenience-style items are placed *within* an aisle, it's more likely customers would miss them.)

While food retailers may decide on an initial location for their grab-and-go display cases, this is always subject to change. *Store renovations, keeping up with industry design trends or simply wanting to test out another location for the case* — any number of elements could be the cause. With these factors in mind, refrigerated display cases should be easy to move on the sales floor to avoid obstacles or headaches down the road, while providing the right amount of shelf space.





Preserved Freshness

Freshly prepared foods can be quite profitable for food retailers, but if grab-and-go items spoil on store shelves, the business can incur losses, from safety hazards to wasted inventory. And if one customer has a negative experience, word is likely to spread and further impact a store's foot traffic.

In many cases, faulty refrigeration systems are to blame for food quality issues. This is most often attributed back to improper temperature fluctuations, where insufficient cooling can cause bacteria to spread, especially during extended "off-cycle" defrost times. To avoid these mishaps, food retailers should invest in refrigerated display cases that are proven to deliver reliable performance and keep food fresh throughout its shelf life and available through its sell-by date.



Display Freshly Prepared Foods in Pure Cold Cases

As a leading innovator in self-contained refrigeration, Pure Cold understands the challenges that food retailers face. These insights have been used to guide the development of their fixtures.

Pure Cold fixtures are designed with both flexibility and reliability in mind:

- ✓ Without the need for extensive pipework or mechanics, and with the inclusion of castors for ease of mobility, Pure Cold self-contained fixtures can be relocated with minimal disruption to customers, or the infrastructure as a whole. All they require is an electrical outlet to run.
- ✓ From an operational standpoint, Pure Cold self-contained fixtures function more like a home refrigerator than a commercial refrigerator, with all components included in individual units. This allows for more efficient operations and minimizes room for issues.



Additional Benefits of Pure Cold Fixtures

- Faster installation times
- Self-evaporative
- Pull-out maintenance tray
- Minimal noise
- Environmentally friendly

When it comes to using Pure Cold fixtures to display your freshly prepared foods, the team at Pro HVAC/R can help. We'll supply you with state-of-the-art Pure Cold systems, while using the latest techniques and technologies to install and maintain these fixtures. You can think of us as a full-service commercial refrigeration provider that works to protect your investment.

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