

## 10 Tips to Start Saving Money and Energy in your Commercial Kitchen Today

by Jeff Breeden, Chief Merchant

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Energy conservation is a hot topic these days from restaurants to cafeterias to university dining halls. A recent ENERGY STAR® survey found that restaurant owners could increase profits up to 30% by simply “going green” in the kitchen. These [top 10 savings tips](#) will help you reduce the cost in your energy bill while maximizing profit dollars.

### **1. Turn It Off!**

Just like leaving the lights on in your home, leaving equipment to run idly will cost you hundreds of dollars for unused energy. By turning off your inactive equipment, it saves energy and plenty of cash on your next gas, electric, or water bill. For those times when you forget to turn off equipment after closing, electrical timers can be placed on outlets to automatically flip off equipment when you aren't around.

Typical equipment left on overnight or during idle kitchen hours are griddles, French tops, ranges, [convection ovens](#), and dish machines. These can all have timers placed between their power outlets and cords to turn them off when you forget.

Energy Saver #1: Even if you remember to turn off some equipment, other side tools are often forgotten. For instance, after you turn off your dish machine, don't forget to turn off the booster heater.

Energy Saver #2: You can't turn the whole griddle off, but you can turn off some of the burners during slower business hours. Turn off all the griddle burners except leaving one burner on for off-peak hours. This will save you energy while still keeping kitchen services available.

### **2. Review Your Lighting**

Areas such as walk-in coolers or your dry store room don't need to be illuminated all day long. Turning off lights as you leave typically unused areas is a great way to save money on your energy bill. Again, electrical timers can be used in these areas especially if they are commonly forgotten and left on overnight.

The kind of lighting you use makes a significant difference in your energy consumption too. Florescent lighting uses 1/4 to 1/3 less energy than normal bright lights. Replacing bulbs with higher efficient options will show a lower cost in your monthly bill.

Energy Saver #3: Higher efficiency bulbs can be used in areas that require constant lighting. Replace incandescent lights in your walk in cooler with fluorescent lights which are cooler and consume less energy.

### **3. Reduce Water Consumption**

The US Green Building Council has developed LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Certification, a national standard for the design, construction and operation of high performance green buildings which in turn generates energy savings. These standards have been embraced by US schools from kindergarten to high school. [T&S Faucets](#) are designed to support these new standards by promoting efficient water usage in hand sinks, prep sinks and cleanup sinks. When replacing kitchen equipment, make sure to purchase products that contribute to these new standards to help you reduce energy costs.

Energy Saver #4: Replace older faucets with the newly developed models that conserve water without compromising performance. You can find a list of endorsed products on the official [Green Restaurant Association web site](#).

Energy Saver #5: Using a standard dishwasher to clean dishes is sufficient for glassware and other kitchen equipment. Don't pre-wash dishes. It's often unnecessary, wasting water and energy and increasing operational costs.

### **4. Make Your Menu More Efficient**

Are your menu items being prepped and cooked as efficiently as possible? Items that need to be thawed for daily food service can be defrosted in a [commercial refrigerator](#) overnight instead of under running water reducing energy usage and conserving water. Review your menu to see if there are common ingredients or items that can all come from one source. Minimizing the number of individual deliveries you receive weekly will add to your conservation practices and reduce your delivery expenses as well as receiving time when you can be going in and out of cold storage using additional energy to bring it back to safe temperatures.

### **5. Keep Equipment Properly Maintained**

Keeping equipment properly maintained has valuable cost efficient benefits. Although a habit for some restaurant owners to let equipment run until a major problem arises, having

equipment serviced regularly can catch operational problems. Small problems can become high cost issues through poor performance or a need for greater amounts of energy to maintain required temperatures for cooking, or cooling foods. Keeping equipment maintained also helps eliminate break downs that cause down time where you may need to use an inefficient cooking method as an alternative until your equipment is repaired or replaced.

Energy Saver #6: Delime your steamer regularly to save energy by making your boiler run as efficiently as possible and extending your equipment life.

## **6. Always Keep Equipment Clean**

Setting up a nightly cleaning routine will help you keep equipment running properly so ranges, ovens, and refrigerators perform at their peak efficiency. Clogged burners, for instance, use more energy to heat and cook food. By unclogging burners, you keep your range using less energy to work at maximum performance.

Gaskets on kitchen ovens become cruddy and build up residue that intrudes on the seal between the rubber and the metal. Allowing outside air to enter the oven requires more energy to keep the oven temperature set. Keep ovens and their doors clean to allow them to heat more efficiently.

Energy Saver #7: Vacuuming refrigerator coils keeps the cooling machinery operating at maximum efficiency. Cleaning coils and keeping dust and materials from building up around them will keep your refrigerator running more efficiently and use less energy.

## **7. Close the Door**

Busy kitchen staff may often forget to do the simplest of energy efficient steps. Leaving oven doors open releases vast amounts of heat. Each time you open an oven door the temperature can drop by as much as 25° F.; watch the clock and use a timer instead. Don't leave the convection oven or steamer door open too long or it will just continue to release heat, burning unnecessary energy to retain the proper cooking temperature. The walk-in cooler is another door that needs to be shut at all times or cooling becomes a continuous energy pit.

Energy Saver #8: If doors such as the walk-in cooler are consistently left open, place spring hinges on the doors and it will automatically close, eliminating the opportunity for staff to forget to shut the door.

## **8. Optimize Equipment Capacity**

Smaller volume kitchens can use smaller capacity equipment. For instance, steaming small portions of vegetables can be done in the microwave instead of a large capacity steamer.

When choosing from the variety of product manufacturers and standard size equipment, purchase only the size that you need to maximize output while minimizing energy usage. Large production equipment isn't needed if the kitchen doesn't have a high volume of customers.

Buy equipment that is Energy Star Certified. This is a quick and easy way to identify equipment that will keep energy costs down but still provide a quality cooking experience. To review a list of more than 1,000 energy efficient food service items and about 500 pieces of Energy Star equipment, visit the official [Manitowoc web site](#).

Energy Saver #9: When washing dishes in a dishwasher, only run the machine when it is full. This will limit the amount of times the dishwasher is run, greatly decreasing energy costs and water consumption.

## **9. Invest in New Energy Saving Technology**

For older kitchens, saving money means replacing old equipment. Although the cost is high in the beginning, over time you earn that money back in utility bills. Newer technologies have been created with energy savings in mind.

"Go green" has gone from a small-time idea to a globally accepted concept. You can find plenty of highly efficient [restaurant equipment](#) at CooksDirect.com or other online distributors. They can help you replace old equipment notorious for high energy consumption like dishwashers and ovens with newer, more efficient products.

## **10. It Pays to Save Money**

Many cities and counties offer energy saving incentives for individuals and corporations who choose to go green. Besides saving hundreds of dollars on your utility bills, you can get money

back rebates from the government. To find out more information, visit [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov) or contact your local city government for a list of rebates offered by federal and city governments.

Energy Saver #10: Be sure to check in with your local government offices to take advantage of government incentives and tax benefits for any of the steps you take in your kitchen to reduce your energy usage, such as the energy star equipment rebates. These incentives go straight to your bottom line, while the steps you take provide continuous benefits for your operation and the environment.

About Jeff Breeden and Cook's Direct:

Jeff Breeden is active in the Foodservice Industry through his work at Cook's and as a member of NAFED (National Association of Food Equipment Dealers). During the past 12 years, he has held a variety of roles including new product development, national account sales, and brand development. In his current responsibility as Chief Merchant, he utilizes his experience and expertise to find innovative equipment and supply solutions to meet the evolving needs of restaurant and institutional foodservice operations. Cook's Direct provides a full range of commercial kitchen solutions including all types of kitchen supplies and heavy duty restaurant equipment to correctional facilities, institutions and other large foodservice operations across North America. The company was founded over 10 years ago and is known for its innovative products, strong customer service and expert knowledge of institutional kitchen operations.

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