

Ice Cream & Gelato Parlor Checklists

Goods-In · Opening · Freezer Chain & Cabinet Temps · Dipping Well & Allergen Service · Display & Portioning · Closing

Frozen Deliveries and Receiving

The cold chain either arrives intact or it doesn't. Reject bad product at the door. You can't fix melted and refrozen product later.

ACCEPT ONLY AN UNBROKEN COLD CHAIN

- ☐ **Check every frozen pallet at the door with a probe or infrared thermometer. Reject anything warmer than -18°C (0°F).**
Product that arrives warm has already lost texture and shelf life you paid for. Reject it while it is still the supplier's problem.
- ☐ **Reject tubs that show signs of melting and refreezing: ice on the surface, air gaps inside, or lids that are dented or frozen down.**
Ice on the surface and dented lids are clear proof the load thawed and refroze. That tub will scoop gritty, and customers will send it back.
- ☐ **Move accepted stock into the holding freezer within minutes. Don't wait until the end of the shift.**
Every minute on a warm loading dock costs you texture and profit. Stock left out is the easiest waste to avoid.

LOG WHAT YOU TOOK IN

- ☐ **Write down the lot or batch code and best-before date for every tub when it arrives.**
Lot codes let you pull one batch instead of the whole freezer in a recall. They also make using the oldest-expiring stock first (FEFO) possible.
- ☐ **Count what was delivered compared with what you ordered. Chase any missing top-selling flavours the same day.**
A short delivery on your best-selling flavour can cause a stockout mid-week. You can still prevent it this morning.
- ☐ **Read the allergen label on every new or changed tub. Update the counter allergen chart that same day.**
A quiet recipe change is how a nut warning goes missing from the board. Update it once, when the product arrives, before it reaches a scoop.
- ☐ **Put new tubs behind existing stock. Use the oldest-expiring stock first (FEFO), sorted by best-before date, then by lot.**
Serve the oldest scoops first. This way, nothing sits at the back of the freezer and turns into a write-off from ice crystals.

Opening - Set Up to Scoop

Check that the cold chain held overnight, then fill the case. Nothing gets served before you read and log the temperatures.

PROVE THE CHAIN HELD OVERNIGHT

- ☐ **Read and log the holding-freezer temperature and every cabinet temperature before you serve the first scoop.**
If you catch an overnight failure at opening, it's just a repair. If you find it at 3pm, it means dumped product and a closed counter.
- ☐ **Look for signs of an overnight failure: pooled water, soft tub edges, or frost on the wrong side of the glass.**
Cabinets can recover overnight and show a normal reading at opening. The product tells you what the display can't.
- ☐ **Pull and write off any tub that softened overnight. Never refreeze it and serve it.**
Refreezing hides the damage from you, but not from the customer. One gritty scoop can cost you a repeat customer, not just one sale.

SET THE COUNTER UP TO SELL

- ☐ **Fill and level every pan or pozzetto to the rim before you open the doors.**
A full, smoothly faced pan looks fresh and popular. A scraped-out pan tells customers to pick something else.
- ☐ **Bring the day's serving pans to the right serving temperature before the rush, not during it.**
Rock-hard pans slow down every serve and can bend scoops. Tempered pans keep the line moving and portions accurate.
- ☐ **Confirm your top 10 flavours are in the case and have backup in the holding freezer.**
The backup tub is what stops your best-seller from running out at your busiest time. Check it before you need it.
- ☐ **Review yesterday's log of dumped and sold-out product. Adjust today's pan quantities up or down.**
If a flavour sold out, put out more pans. If you dumped product, put out fewer. This habit stops you repeating yesterday's loss.

SAFE TO SERVE

- ☐ **Turn on the dipper well. If it runs water, confirm steady flow to the drain. If it is heated, fill it and start the 4-hour water-change timer.**
A still, unmoving well is the most common citation inspectors write for this kind of shop. Set it right at opening, and the timer does the rest.
- ☐ **Check that today's allergen chart is up to date. Check that the dedicated allergy-scoop kit is stocked and clean.**
The kit must be ready before the order comes in. You can't put together a clean scoop while customers are waiting in line.

HYGIENE & SAFETY

- ☐ **Screen every staff member for illness before the shift starts. Send home anyone with vomiting, diarrhea, fever, or jaundice.**
Sick staff can spread illness through food. Catching it early stops the spread before service starts.
- ☐ **Never touch ready-to-eat scoops, cones, or toppings with bare hands. Use a clean scoop, gloves, or tongs every time.**
Bare hands carry germs onto food that customers eat right away.
- ☐ **Mix fresh sanitizer for the shift. Test the sanitizer strength (ppm) with a strip. Confirm it reads 50-100 ppm for chlorine sanitizer.**
Weak sanitizer strength (ppm) will not kill germs on hands and surfaces.
- ☐ **Put a clear allergen label on every topping bin: sprinkles, nuts, sauces, and mix-ins.**
Customers with allergies need to see what is in each topping before they order.
- ☐ **Walk the prep and storage areas for a quick pest check before you open. Look for droppings, gnaw marks, or live pests.**
An overnight pest problem must be caught before you start serving.

Freezer Chain & Cabinet Temps

Two different temperatures do two different jobs: -18°C (0°F) or colder for storage, warmer only for scooping. Measure both.

MEASURE THE CHAIN, DON'T ASSUME IT

- ☐ **Log the holding-freezer temperature three times a day. It must read -18°C (0°F) or colder.**
This number protects every tub you own. The storage freezer is the only place that truly keeps the texture safe.
- ☐ **Log every dipping cabinet and gelato display case separately. Take one reading per cabinet, not one for the whole shop.**
Cabinets fail one at a time. A shop-wide average can hide one case that is slowly ruining your best-seller.
- ☐ **Use a min/max or data-logging thermometer. Don't rely on the door dial.**
A single reading misses temperature swings between checks. The excursion you never saw is the one that ruined the texture.

ACT WHEN IT DRIFTS

- ☐ **If a reading is out of range: shut the lids, move at-risk tubs to the holding freezer, log the time, and call the manager.**
What you do in the first ten minutes decides whether this is a minor problem or a full write-off of the case.
- ☐ **Keep lids, covers, and night covers closed whenever no one is serving from that case.**
An open case runs warmer and costs more to run. Closing it protects both the texture and your electricity bill.
- ☐ **Check door seals, frost build-up, and defrost cycles every week. Log any problems and book the repair.**
Frost and worn seals let a cabinet slowly run warm for weeks before anyone notices the gritty texture.

PROTECT THE TEXTURE YOU SELL

- ☐ **Every week, taste and check the oldest tub in each cabinet for ice crystals, grittiness, and shrinkage.**
Ice crystal growth is the first damage a warm cabinet causes, and you've already paid for it. Catch it in one tub before it spreads across the whole case.
- ☐ **Set a limit on days in the cabinet. Rotate out any tub that has passed that limit.**
Warmer storage only lasts so long. A tub that has sat too long will scoop gritty, even if it never melted.

Dipping Well, Scoops & Allergen Service

The scoop is the contamination route in this kind of shop. Do between-use storage, scoop washing, and allergy orders the same way every time.

BETWEEN-USE SCOOP STORAGE THAT PASSES INSPECTION

- ☐ **Run the dipper well with enough water flow to flush food bits down the drain. Aim for at least 0.2 gpm (0.76 L/min).**
Running water is what makes it legal to store scoops between uses. The flow rate is the difference between following the rules and a high water bill.
- ☐ **Heated well: keep the water at 57°C (135°F) or above and change it every 4 hours. Log each change.**
A heated well only works while the water is hot and fresh. If you don't log a change, assume it wasn't done.
- ☐ **Never leave a scoop sitting in still, unheated water between uses.**
Still, lukewarm water is the most common citation for scoop shops. It's full of bacteria, and you dip into it with every serve.

KEEP THE SERVED PRODUCT CLEAN

- ☐ **Swap scoops for washed ones on a fixed schedule, by the clock, not just when they look dirty.**
Judging by eye is how a scoop stays in use all day without a wash. A fixed swap time is easy to check and easy to defend.
- ☐ **Store spare scoops, spades, and cone equipment covered and protected, not sitting loose on the cabinet rail.**
Inspectors cite frozen-dessert shops most often for equipment storage and contamination protection. Uncovered equipment is the easiest point to lose.
- ☐ **Wash your hands and change gloves every time you switch tasks: cash, then scoop, then cones, then cleaning.**
Staff hands are the documented contamination route into ice cream at retail. Poor hygiene fails about two-thirds of inspections. Hands pick up germs when you switch tasks.
- ☐ **Soft-serve: check the mix is holding at 5°C (41°F) or below. Do the manufacturer's full strip-down clean on schedule. Log both.**
Warm mix and a machine that isn't fully cleaned are how soft-serve fails a health inspection swab test. Each failure can cost you a day of business.

ALLERGEN ORDERS

- ☐ **For an allergy order, use a fresh washed scoop from the dedicated kit. Take it from an untouched part of the tub.**
A shared scoop and a picked-over tub surface are the cross-contact route customers can't see and won't forgive.
- ☐ **Never answer an allergen question from memory. Read the current allergen chart out loud, every time.**
Feeling sure is not the same as being right. Most staff feel confident but get details wrong, and the shop usually already 'knew' the answer.

Display Case, Portioning & Margin

You sell weight, not scoops. Portion to the correct spec, serve at the right hardness, and pull anything the cabinet has damaged.

PORITION FOR MARGIN

- ☐ **At the start of every shift, weigh one sample scoop of each size against your target gram weight.**
A few extra grams on every scoop means your profit walks out the door, one cone at a time.
- ☐ **Check that scoop and spade sizes match your menu prices. Retire any bent or worn scoops.**
A worn scoop quietly changes your prices without you noticing. Small, medium, and large stop meaning anything.
- ☐ **If you make ice cream in-house, check the weight per gallon or litre against your amount of air mixed in (overrun) on every batch.**
Too much air mixed in breaks the legal weight rule and shortchanges the customer. Too little means you give away product you could have sold.

SERVE IT AT THE TEMPERATURE THE RECIPE WAS BUILT FOR

- ☐ **Hold gelato and hard ice cream at their own serving temperature ranges. Never use one setpoint for the whole counter.**
Gelato served at hard-ice-cream temperature scoops like a brick. Hard ice cream at gelato temperature turns soft and slumps in the pan.
- ☐ **Pull any pan that has ice crystals, freezer burn, or heat damage out of the case right away.**
One gritty scoop can cost you a repeat visit. Take the write-off once instead of losing regular customers over time.

SELL WHAT'S IN THE CASE

- ☐ **Combine and smooth over pans as they sell down through the day.**
A re-faced pan still looks full. A dug-out pan quietly stops selling long before it's actually empty.
- ☐ **Put your best-selling and most profitable flavours where customers see them first, and nearest the till.**
Customers often decide what to buy right at the counter. Put your best earners where that decision happens.
- ☐ **At the end of each day, log dumped and unsold product by flavour and reason.**
Knowing which flavours you dump stops you from making too much of the same slow seller next week.

Closing - Clean Down & Protect the Chain

Record the day's numbers, fully clean the machines, and leave the freezer chain in a state you can prove overnight.

CAPTURE THE NUMBERS THAT SET TOMORROW'S STOCK LEVELS

- ☐ **Enter today's dumped, wasted, and sold-out figures for each flavour.**
Tomorrow's pan plan and next week's order both depend on this log.
- ☐ **Note which flavours ran out, and at what time.**
The time matters. A 2pm sell-out on a hot Saturday is a par-level problem, not a demand surprise.

- ☐ **Reorder flavours that are below par before the cut-off time. Adjust your par levels as the season changes.**
Demand swings a lot between busy and slow months. Stock targets set in January will lose you sales in August.
- ☐ **Check that the cash matches your sales, and log any difference.**
This catches errors and register mistakes while you still remember the shift clearly.

CLEAN DOWN

- ☐ **Drain and clean dipper wells. Fully clean the soft-serve machine on its schedule. Log both.**
Wells and machines are where bacteria problems start. A signed log is your proof that they didn't happen here.
- ☐ **Sanitise cabinet rails, glass, and surfaces that touch food. Check for signs of pests and record it.**
Pests and contamination problems are the top reasons frozen-dessert shops get cited. The nightly walk-through is where you catch them first.

PROTECT THE CHAIN OVERNIGHT

- ☐ **Put lids on, pull night covers down, and leave cabinets and freezers running.**
Covered cases hold their temperature better and cost less to run overnight. Never turn a case off to 'save power'.
- ☐ **Return part-used tubs to -18°C (0°F) holding. Seal and date them.**
Cabinet temperature is for scooping, not storing. A night in the holding freezer gives you free shelf life.
- ☐ **Confirm the holding freezer is at target before you lock up and arm the alarm or logger.**
An overnight failure you catch at opening is just a repair bill. One you find on Monday can cost you the whole freezer.

HYGIENE & SAFETY

- ☐ **Mix fresh sanitizer for your final wipe-down. Test the sanitizer strength (ppm) with a strip. Confirm it reads 50-100 ppm for chlorine sanitizer.**
A weak sanitizer strength (ppm) leaves germs on surfaces overnight.
- ☐ **Log the name of any staff member you sent home sick during the shift.**
A written record proves you followed the illness policy if anyone asks.

Weekly Checks

Do these once a week, not every day.

PEST INSPECTION, CALIBRATION & TOPPING-BAR DEEP CLEAN

- ☐ **Do a full pest inspection of the whole shop once a week. Check traps, corners, and door gaps for droppings or nests.**
A full weekly inspection catches pest problems that a quick daily glance can miss.
- ☐ **Calibrate every thermometer and probe once a week. Check each one against ice water, which should read 0°C (32°F).**
A thermometer that reads wrong can let unsafe stock pass as safe.
- ☐ **Once a week, strip down the hot fudge warmer, whipped-cream dispenser, and topping bins. Wash, sanitize, and dry every part.**
Daily wiping does not remove the build-up inside warmers and dispensers.