

Starting a New Restaurant or Café?

This guide has been created to assist you in designing and setting up your commercial kitchen, while also building the strategies needed for long-term success. In many ways, the planning stage is where the ultimate success or failure of a catering operation is determined. The decisions made at the beginning can influence everything from workflow and compliance to costs, productivity, and future growth.



**Sydney
Commercial
Kitchens**

Table Of Contents

Planning for Success	2
Designing your Layout for Food Flow	5
Designing an Efficient and Safe Cooking Line	10
Design Conclusion	13
The Foundations of a Successful Restaurant Business	14
A Final Word	18
SCK Is Here to Help	19

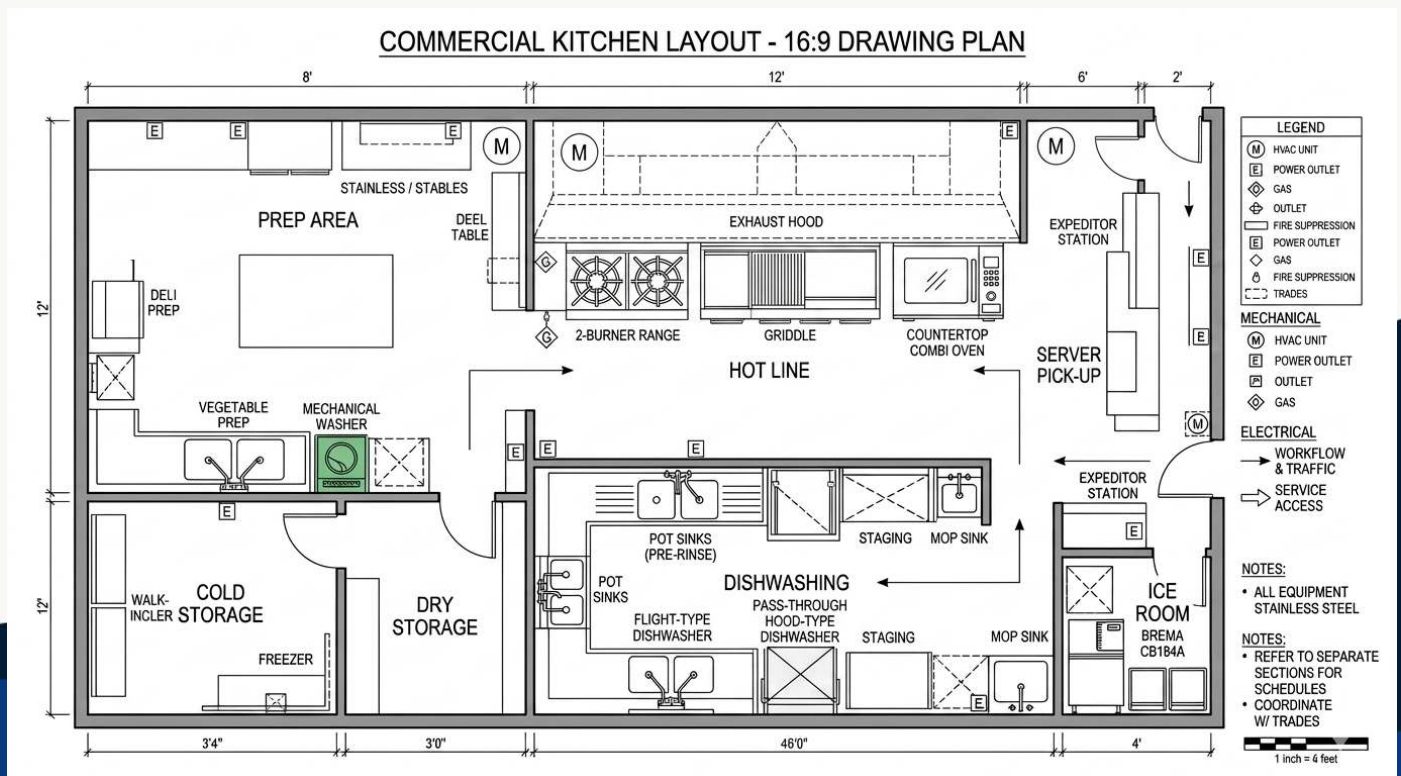
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Planning for Success

This guide has been produced to assist you in designing and setting up your commercial kitchen, while also helping you build the strategies needed for long-term success.

The planning stage is often where the ultimate success or failure of a catering operation is decided. The choices made early can have a major impact on workflow, safety, compliance, productivity, and profitability.

The aim of kitchen planning is to create a workspace that delivers maximum efficiency and safety, while minimizing the waste of labor, energy, and materials.



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The basic principles of kitchen design remain the same whether you are planning a large or small kitchen. However, in smaller kitchens, space limitations can significantly affect workflow and the overall efficiency of the layout.

Tip: It is always wise to seek advice from a professional kitchen designer.

Before you begin planning a kitchen, you need a sound understanding of:

- the main types of food service you will provide
- the structure of your menu and workflow patterns
- the equipment available to you
- how each item of equipment will be used, including its capacity

PLANNING YOUR COMMERCIAL KITCHEN

Key considerations for a successful operation

1. MAIN TYPES OF FOOD SERVICE YOU WILL PROVIDE

- DINE-IN**
Full table service with seated guests.
- TAKEAWAY**
Food prepared for collection.
- DELIVERY**
Orders delivered to customers.
- CATERING / EVENTS**
Food prepared for off-site events.
- CAFÉ / BAR**
Beverages, light meals and snacks.

WHY IT MATTERS
Understanding your food service types helps determine kitchen layout, equipment, storage needs and workflow.

2. STRUCTURE OF YOUR MENU & WORKFLOW PATTERNS

EXAMPLE MENU STRUCTURE

- ENTRÉES / STARTERS**
Salads, soups, small plates
- MAINS**
Grilled, cooked and composed dishes
- SIDES**
Vegetables, rice, rice, etc.
- DESSERTS**
Cakes, pastries, hot cross buns
- BEVERAGES**
Coffee, juices, soft drinks, alcoholic beverages

TYPICAL WORKFLOW PATTERN

RECEIVING → STORAGE → PREP → COOKING → PLATING → SERVICE

WHY IT MATTERS
A clear menu structure and efficient workflow reduce unnecessary movement, improve speed and consistency, and increase productivity.

3. EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE TO YOU

- COOKING EQUIPMENT**
Ovens, ranges, grills, toasters, cooktops
- REFRIGERATION**
Fridges, freezers, cool rooms
- PREPARATION**
Bench tops, mixers, slicers, food processors
- DISHWASHING**
Dishwashers, sinks, wash tables
- HOT HOLDING**
Heated cabinets, hot lamps
- SMALLGOODS**
Microwaves, toasters, blenders, scales
- STORAGE & SHELVING**
Packing shelving, expedient bins
- EXTRACTION & VENTILATION**
Exhaust hoods, make-up-air
- SAFETY & HYGIENE**
Hot/wash basins, hand basins, fire extinguishers

WHY IT MATTERS
Having the right equipment – in the right quantity and capacity – is essential for efficiency and compliance.

4. HOW EACH ITEM OF EQUIPMENT WILL BE USED, INCLUDING ITS CAPACITY

EQUIPMENT	PRIMARY USE	CAPACITY	QTY
6 Burner Gas Range with Oven	Roasting, boiling, baking	Up to 120 meals per hour	1
Combi Oven	Baking, roasting, steam cooking	10 x 1 1/2 GN trays per load	1
Deep Fryer (Two Tank)	Frying	25 L per tank (50 L total)	1
Upright Fridge	Refrigerated storage (0-4°C)	700 L	2
Upright Freezer	Frozen storage (-18°C)	700 L	1
Bench Top Mixer	Mixing, dough preparation	20 L bowl	1
Commercial Dishwasher	Washing plates, utensils, cookware	Up to 60 racks per hour	1
Stainless Steel Prep Bench	Food preparation and assembly	1800 x 700 mm	2
Extraction Hood	Ventilation over cooking line	2300 mm wide (6000 m ³ /hr)	1

WHY IT MATTERS
Understanding how each item will be used – and its capacity – ensures your kitchen can meet demand at peak times without bottlenecks or over-investment.

KEY DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- Short, logical flow between stations
- Separation of clean and dirty workflows
- Adequate space for peak service

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This free guide will help you prepare a basic kitchen design. Gathering accurate information before finalizing your plan is extremely important, as it helps ensure the kitchen you establish is both energy efficient and highly productive for your operation.

When planning your new commercial kitchen, you must also incorporate the relevant requirements of Australian Food Standards, Australian Standards, the Building Code of Australia, and have a sound understanding of Occupational Health, Safety, and Welfare Regulations.

Download the current code here:

[National Code for the Construction and Fitout - Food Premises](#)

NATIONAL CONSTRUCTION CODE 2016

VOLUME ONE
Building Code of Australia
Class 2 to Class 9 Buildings

VOLUME TWO
Building Code of Australia
Class 1 and Class 10 Buildings

VOLUME THREE
Plumbing Code of Australia

FOOD STANDARDS
Australia New Zealand
Te Mana Kounga Kai - Ahitereiria me Aotearoa

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Designing your Layout for Food Flow

Your kitchen should be designed to support the natural sequence of events that take place during food preparation. It sounds simple, yet many foodservice facilities, from independent venues to large chains, are designed without fully considering this essential principle.

A well-planned kitchen layout improves workflow, reduces unnecessary movement, saves time, and helps create a safer and more efficient operation. Let's look at how this principle applies when designing a commercial kitchen.

1. Delivery of Raw Products

The first stage in the food preparation process is the delivery and acceptance of raw food products.



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2. Storage of Raw Products

Once goods are received and accepted, they need to be stored in the appropriate area, whether that is refrigerated storage, freezer storage, or dry storage.

This immediately shows the close relationship between receiving and storage. These areas should be positioned adjacent to one another to support efficient workflow. In most kitchen designs, locating receiving and storage on opposite sides of the facility would be highly inefficient.

3. Preparation

The next stage is food preparation. The preparation area should be located close to refrigerated and frozen storage areas so ingredients can be accessed quickly and efficiently.

Once preparation is complete, the food will usually move in one of two directions: back into refrigerated storage for later use, or onward to the cooking and production area. At this point, the logic of food flow within the kitchen begins to take shape.



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4. Cooking

Once the food has been prepared, it moves into the cooking stage. After cooking, plating, and garnishing, it is ready to be served to the customer by the waiting staff.

If there is more than one chef working in the kitchen, their work areas should be planned so they do not cross over or interfere with one another. Each chef should have a clearly defined station with convenient access to the equipment, tools, and ingredients they need. This helps improve speed, reduce confusion, and create a safer, more efficient kitchen during busy service periods.

5. Serving

The design of the pick-up area is critical to the smooth operation of the kitchen.

Waiting staff should be able to enter and leave the kitchen efficiently without disrupting the work of the cooking team. By design, there should be a clear separation between service staff and cooks so that neither interferes with the other's workflow. A well-planned pick-up point helps maintain speed, safety, and communication during service.



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6. Clearing

Once customers have finished their meals, tables are cleared and dirty plates, cutlery, and other items are returned to the wash-up area.

The washing area is a key component of any kitchen operation and must be strategically located. Because both service staff and kitchen staff need access to this area, its placement requires careful planning.

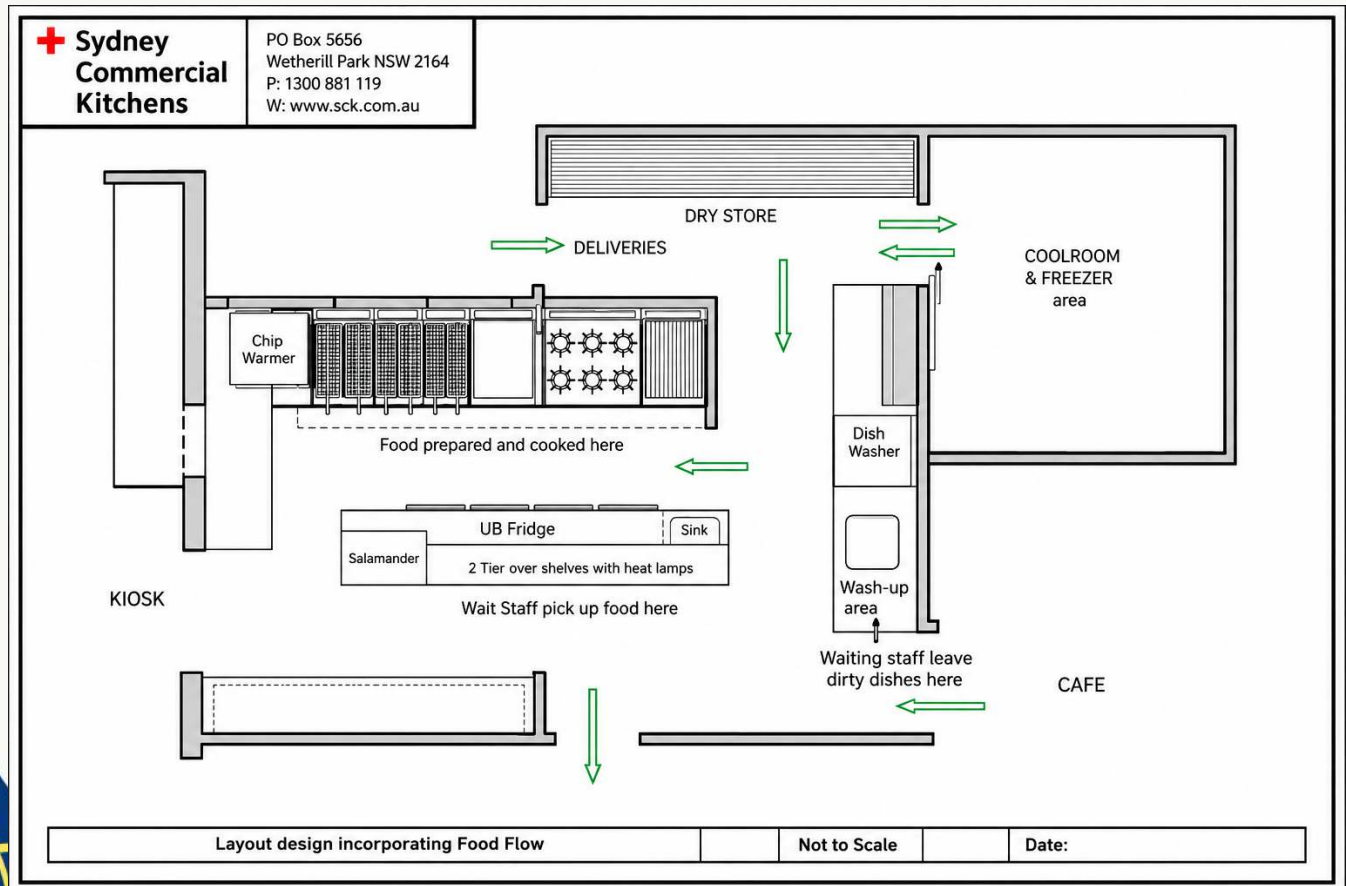
Ideally, the workflow of waiting staff and kitchen staff should come together at the food pick-up and soiled drop-off points, but those traffic paths should never cross. This helps reduce congestion, improve efficiency, and maintain a safer working environment.



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This chapter highlights the importance of getting food flow right when designing your kitchen. From delivery and storage through to preparation, cooking, service, and wash-up, each stage needs to follow a logical sequence.

When food flow is planned correctly, it improves efficiency, reduces unnecessary movement, supports safer working conditions, and helps both kitchen and service staff operate without getting in each other's way. Good food flow is one of the foundations of a productive, well-organized, and successful commercial kitchen.



Designing an Efficient and Safe Cooking Line

Designing your commercial kitchen should take into account both food flow and selecting the right equipment for the job.

As with any workspace where efficiency, speed, and accuracy are essential, the cooking line must be carefully planned to allow chefs to perform at their best. A well-designed cooking line involves far more than simply placing equipment under an exhaust hood. It requires thoughtful planning to ensure the layout supports your menu, workflow, compliance, and staff safety.

The following are some of the key issues to consider when developing your cooking equipment layout.

1. The Menu

This may sound obvious, but the first question is whether you have selected the right equipment for your operation. The configuration of the cooking line will mean little unless the equipment is capable of supporting your menu and cooking style. Your menu determines the ingredients needed for each dish, the methods of preparation, and the type of cooking equipment required.

Your menu mix then determines the quantity of each item that needs to be produced. Both of these factors should be considered when planning the most effective cooking line layout.

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2. Workflow

One of the most common mistakes in designing a cooking line is failing to create clearly defined stations that efficiently support the production tasks required.

When workflow is not properly considered, congestion and bottlenecks can quickly develop in production areas, especially during busy service periods. Each station should be arranged so chefs can work efficiently, with convenient access to the equipment, utensils, and ingredients they need, while minimizing unnecessary movement and disruption.

3. Code Requirements

In some cases, council and code requirements will take precedence over your preferred configuration.

For example, a deep fryer must be separated from any open flame source, such as a gas range or char grill, by a minimum 300 mm infill stainless steel bench, or by a vertical heat shield or baffle. This helps prevent flame from coming into contact with the oil, which is a flammable substance. It can also reduce the risk of water from large stockpots splashing into hot oil.

4. Employee Safety

The design of the cooking line should always consider the safety of your staff.

Placing unprotected equipment, such as a fryer or char grill, at the end of a cooking line near a walkway can create an unnecessary risk of injury. In most cases, it is better to position enclosed or non-cooking equipment at the end of the line to reduce this risk.

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Employee safety can also be improved through the right equipment specifications and options. For example, providing a fryer filter, whether built-in or mobile, helps staff handle hot oil more safely. Equipment should also be installed at practical working heights. In Australia, the standard working height is generally 900 mm.

EMPLOYEE SAFETY

The design of the cooking line should always consider the safety of your staff.

- SAFE LAYOUT**
Clear walkways and logical work flow help prevent accidents and collisions.
- HEAT PROTECTION**
Use guards, splashbacks and heat shields to protect staff from heat and splashes.
- KEEP IT CLEAN**
Clean floors and prompt spill clean-up help prevent slips and falls.
- PPE & TRAINING**
Provide the right PPE and ensure staff are trained in safe work practices.
- BE PREPARED**
Keep first aid kits and emergency information accessible.

VENTILATION
Effective extraction keeps the air clean and comfortable.

HEAT PROTECTION
Use splashbacks and shields to protect staff from heat and splashes.

SAFE EQUIPMENT
Use equipment with safety features and keep guards in place.

KEEP FLOORS SAFE
Non-slip flooring and clean walkways help prevent slips and falls.

WORKING HEIGHT
Equipment set at the right height reduces strain and fatigue.

FIRST AID KIT

FIRE BLANKET

FIRE BLANKET

FIRE BLANKET

FIRE BLANKET

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Design Conclusion

There are many factors to consider when determining the most efficient equipment layout for your kitchen. Taking the issues outlined above into account will help ensure your cooking line supports, rather than hinders, the efforts of your culinary team.

It is always worth taking time to review your facility and the way your operation functions day to day. When a kitchen is designed around the natural flow of food, service quality improves, the risk of cross-contamination is reduced, and staff can work with greater efficiency and confidence.

This can also have a positive impact on employee morale, as a well-planned workspace is easier, safer, and less stressful to operate.

If your facility already follows this approach, you will likely have seen the benefits firsthand. If not, it may be time to consider how your current layout or operating procedures could be improved to better support the flow of food and create a more efficient kitchen.

DESIGNED AROUND THE NATURAL FLOW OF FOOD

When a kitchen is designed around the natural flow of food, service quality improves, the risk of cross-contamination is reduced, and staff can work with greater efficiency and confidence.

- SERVICE QUALITY IMPROVES**
Smoother operations lead to better food and faster service.
- RISK OF CROSS-CONTAMINATION IS REDUCED**
Separation of raw and cooked foods keeps your kitchen safe.
- STAFF WORK WITH GREATER EFFICIENCY AND CONFIDENCE**
A logical layout reduces unnecessary movement and stress.

A KITCHEN THAT WORKS BETTER

1. RECEIVING & STORAGE
2. PREPARATION
3. COOKING
4. SERVICE
5. WASH-UP & CLEANING

A well-designed kitchen layout supports food flow, improves safety, and helps your team perform at their best every day.

- BETTER PERFORMANCE
- IMPROVED SAFETY
- HAPPIER STAFF
- BETTER RESULTS

The Foundations of a Successful Restaurant Business

Successful businesses all have one thing in common: they operate with a clear business plan. A good business plan gives direction, helps guide decisions, and creates a stronger foundation for long-term success. So what steps should you take to develop a successful plan for your restaurant or cafe?

1. Define Your Mission, Vision, and Goals

Be clear about what you want to achieve. Create an inspiring vision and a mission statement that will motivate both you and your team. Set practical, measurable goals that turn your ideas into action.

2. Build a Strategy for Marketing Success

Develop a long-term marketing strategy that supports sustainable growth. Identify your target market, define your business niche, and determine your unique selling proposition. From there, you can build a marketing campaign that helps attract and retain the right customers.

3. Create Effective Systems

Systems are essential to running a smooth and profitable operation. You will need reliable systems for ordering, kitchen management, office administration, and staff management. Good systems create consistency, improve efficiency, and make it easier to scale and control the business.

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4. Employ and Train the Right Staff

The quality of your staff can have a major impact on the success of your venue. Focus on finding the right people, then train them to work according to your standards and systems. A well-trained team is more productive, more confident, and better equipped to deliver a consistent customer experience.

5. Keep Customers Coming Back

Train your staff to deliver the level of service you want your business to be known for. Creating a memorable customer experience is one of the most effective ways to encourage repeat business.

Did you know that customers spend much of their time in a restaurant or cafe waiting:

- waiting to order
- waiting for drinks
- waiting for their meals

The systems you put in place should help reduce unnecessary waiting time and improve the overall experience for your guests.

6. Control Costs

Strong systems also help you control costs. Better ordering processes, disciplined purchasing, and clear procedures can reduce waste and help prevent unnecessary spending.

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7. Keep Good Records

Do not overlook the financial side of the business. Good record keeping helps you understand performance, manage cash flow, control expenses, and identify opportunities to improve profitability. In many cases, accurate records will also save you money over time. There are, of course, many factors that contribute to business success. The points above are simply some of the most important foundations to consider when starting a new restaurant or cafe.

Your business plan shapes the future of your business. Too many small business owners go to work each day without a clear idea of where they want the business to go or how they intend to get there. It is no surprise that the failure rate for small business remains high.

A business plan should be written down, then treated as a working document that can be updated as conditions change. Business environments are constantly evolving, and your plan should evolve with them. At its core, a business plan is a written statement of your goals and the strategies you will use to achieve them.



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Keeping your plan current helps ensure it continues to reflect your thinking, your priorities, and the realities of your market.

It can also provide valuable guidance during the start-up phase, periods of growth, the search for capital, or any other major step your business may take.

What better time than the beginning of a new business to get ahead of your competitors by planning the year ahead?

A business plan will usually include seven critical elements, such as those outlined below.

1. Executive Summary
2. Business Description
3. Market Analysis
4. Products & Services
5. Marketing & Sales Plan
6. Financials
7. Operations Plan

For each element, you should develop a clear description and practical approach, while also considering the common pitfalls that can undermine success. Careful planning in each of these areas will give your business a stronger foundation and a clearer path forward.

SIMPLE BUSINESS PLAN

A business plan is a roadmap for your success.

-  **01 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**
A brief overview of your business, your goals, and how you plan to achieve them.
-  **02 BUSINESS DESCRIPTION**
What your business does, who your customers are, and what makes your business unique.
-  **03 MARKET ANALYSIS**
Understand your industry, target market, competitors, and market trends.
-  **04 PRODUCTS OR SERVICES**
Describe the products or services you offer and the benefits to your customers.
-  **05 MARKETING & SALES PLAN**
How you will attract customers, promote your business, and generate sales.
-  **06 FINANCIAL PLAN**
Your financial projections, funding needs, cash flow, and expected profitability.
-  **07 OPERATIONS PLAN**
How your business will operate day-to-day, including systems, processes, and resources.

 **REVIEW & UPDATE REGULARLY**
Your business plan is a living document. Review and update it often to stay on track and adapt to changes.



A Final Word

The food industry is a demanding combination of manufacturing and retail. It requires careful management of food and perishables, production, people, hygiene, and customer service. Few industries bring together so many variables, each of which can play a major role in success or failure.

It is important to remember that your restaurant or cafe is not just a place to serve food. It is also a business, and the skills required to build a successful business are very different from those needed simply to manage day-to-day service.

From the beginning, you should focus on developing your business skills in three key areas: operational, financial, and marketing. Strength in these areas will give your restaurant or cafe a far better chance of long-term success.

It is also worth remembering that, in business, you always have two sets of customers. The first is the customer who buys your products and services every day. The second is the future customer who may one day buy your business. Everything you do should ultimately add value for both.

We hope the information in this guide has helped you better understand the planning, design, and business strategies involved in opening a new cafe or restaurant, and that it contributes in some way to your long-term success.

Starting a New Restaurant or Café?

SCK Is Here to Help

Planning and fitting out a new cafe or restaurant is a major investment, and getting the early decisions right can make all the difference to your long-term success. That is where Sydney Commercial Kitchens can help.

With decades of industry experience, SCK understands that a successful fitout is about much more than simply supplying equipment. It is about helping you create a kitchen and service environment that works efficiently, supports your menu, suits your workflow, meets compliance requirements, and gives your team the best chance to perform at a high level every day.

We work with new cafe and restaurant owners to help turn ideas into practical, well-planned operations. From the early planning stages through to equipment selection, kitchen layout, and project coordination, our focus is on helping you avoid costly mistakes and make informed decisions from the beginning.

We know that no two venues are exactly alike. A small neighborhood cafe has different needs from a high-volume restaurant, takeaway operation, or bar. That is why we take the time to understand your concept, your space, and your goals before recommending solutions.

Starting a New Restaurant or Café?

When you work with SCK, you benefit from:

- practical industry knowledge built over many years
- guidance on selecting the right equipment for your menu, volume, and budget
- layouts designed around workflow, food flow, and staff efficiency
- support in creating a kitchen that is productive, compliant, and easier to operate
- a team that understands both the operational and business side of hospitality

Starting a new venue can feel overwhelming, but you do not have to do it alone. Sydney Commercial Kitchens is here to help you plan smarter, fit out better, and build a stronger foundation for success.

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide.

When you are ready to take the next step, Sydney Commercial Kitchens is here to help. From planning and design advice to equipment selection and fitout support, we can help you turn your ideas into a practical, well-run operation.

Regards

The SCK Team

This guide has been produced to help you design and set up your commercial kitchen while also developing the strategies needed for long-term success. The planning stage is where the future of a catering operation is often decided, as the choices made early can have a lasting impact on efficiency, profitability, and overall performance.

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