# How do I choose the right Warming and Holding Equipment?

Cooking, cooling, and holding foods the correct way is one of the most important aspects to keeping your customers happy and healthy. Any time you cook an item, and don't serve it right away, it is important to ensure that it either stays above 140 degrees, or below 41 degrees.

To do this, proper usage of food warmers, blast chillers, food bars, hot food tables, and other kinds of warmers is of paramount importance.

Of additional concern is where you will be putting the warmers and holdings. Different units are better suited to be used as merchandisers in the front of the house, or used as simple holding units in the back of the house.

## Dry or Moist Heat?

Warming and holding equipment utilize either dry or moist heat. It is important to select the proper type for the application you are planning.

### Dry Heat

* Uses less energy than moist heat, but takes longer to heat up
* No risk of spilling hot contents when moving warmer
* Works well at holding the temperature of long cook time items, such as soups and stews, when placed in the warmer while still hot
* Can be used as self-service units
* Best suited for keeping moist or fatty food products warm

### Moist Heat

* Keep your food product moist and tender even while holding at a given temperature
* Utilizes a water humidifier to add heat and moisture to your food product
* More sophisticated humidifiers have atmospheric and temperature controls so you can adjust the amount of moisture and heat for different products.
* Best suited for keeping food products from drying out while they stay warm

## When do I use a Food Bar or Hot Food Table?

### Hot Food Table

   Generally, hot food tables are ideal for use in the back of the house as a warming and work station, or in the front of the house in a cafeteria self service application.

* Food bars are customizable and standard tables with cut outs to fit standard size pans
* Use electricity to keep food at the right temperature indefinitely
* Some models have work space or cutting boards as available options
* Ideal for cafeteria service
* Cabinets are insulated to keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold
* Can have sections added for plates and trays, furthering its appeal to self service applications

*Hot Food Tables\*LINK\**

### Food Bar

   Food bars are generally used more for merchandising than cafeteria service, and many come with sun canopies or sneeze guards.

* Do not require electricity, so they are more mobile than hot food tables
* Display product in a different way, increasing impulse buys
* Come in table top configurations, allowing you to use existing tables as the base
* Insulated to help keep food the correct temperature
* May require the use of ice or other products to maintain the ideal temperature

*Food Bars\*LINK\**

## Other Types of Merchandising Warmers.

 Other forms of food warmers are often called "snack warmers", these heated merchandisers and cabinets have nearly infinite potential uses in front of the house applications. Often, these have their best application in the fast food or concession industries, but they can also be used as self service units for an imaginative owner of any food service business. These items are generally counter top display units, either full or self service, with heating sources.

### Self-Service Merchandisers

These merchandisers are generally designed to keep food warm, and allow customers to help themselves. They're great for sandwiches, hamburgers, and other assorted foods that can be pre-prepared. Depending on the model, they may have multiple shelves, and varying degrees of heating ability.

*Self-Service Merchandisers\*LINK\**

### Full-Service Merchandisers

This is the general term for warming merchandisers that are kept behind a counter, but within site of a customer. They display your product, while keeping it hot for service. Pizza display warmers, pretzel display warmers, and more fit into this category. For best results, food must appear fresh.

*Self-Service Merchandisers\*LINK\**

## Overhead Warmers

 There are two main types of overhead warmers. The first are simply heat lamps, which come in any number of sizes and shapes. They are designed to be portable, allowing catering or buffets to have displays of food being kept warm. The second type are heat strips, which are typically installed in the chef line, and are used to hold plates ready for service until they are actually served. All overhead warmers are designed simply; they usually either have an on/off switch, or at most, a high/low temp switch. They are not suited for holding food at temp for a long time, instead, they are used as temporary heat sources while food is waiting to be served.

### Heat Lamps

* Portable
* Durable
* Low energy use
* Ideal for warming french fries
* Ideal for buffet or cafeteria service

*Heat Lamps\*LINK\**

### Heat Strips

* Interchangeably called heat strips and heat lamps
* Come in wide range of lengths, designed to fit underneath shelves in the chef line
* Long lasting and high, even amount of heat produced

*Heat Strips\*LINK\**

###  Drawer Warmers

* Can be a countertop unit, or can be fit into a work table
* Ideal for a busy kitchen, allowing bread and other dry objects to be warmed without taking up floor or counter space
* Not made for front of the house merchandising

*Drawer Warmers\*LINK\**

### Food Warmers

* Used in self-service application to serve hot foods
* Designed to hold standard hotel pans

*Food Warmers\*LINK\**

### Soup Kettles

* Designed specifically for reheating cold soup to a safe holding temperature
* NOT designed to cook raw food

*Soup Kettles\*LINK\**

### Round Food Warmers

* Designed similarly to Soup Kettles, but with more general use in mind
* Not designed to cook raw food

*Round Food Warmers\*LINK\**