



Interview Questions for Commercial Kitchens

It does not matter if you are a startup or seasoned home-based food producer. When you are ready to rent a commercial kitchen space there are a few questions you need to ask.

Incubator Kitchen

An Incubator kitchen is a certified commercial kitchen in which individuals or businesses prepare small batch food products and meals, usually paying an hourly or daily rate to lease a space shared by others. These spaces are most often used by food artisans, personal chefs or food entrepreneurs whose business has a positive social, economic, and health impacts on the local community.

The term shared-use kitchen is sometimes used synonymously with commercial kitchen, certified kitchen, kitchen incubator / incubator kitchen, food business accelerator, commissary kitchen, community kitchen, etc. While a shared-use kitchen may be found in conjunction with these types of kitchens, they do not always mean the same thing.

Shared-Use Kitchen

A Shared-Use kitchen is the most viable option for cottage food operators and food artisans who are looking for an economical cooking space. These kitchens are leased out to multiple food producers, caterers, and pop-up chefs at once.

These businesses share the space and are usually assigned specific storage areas and time slots when they can use the kitchen. A shared space is ideal because the rent may be split among several businesses but working out a schedule among the various chefs can be difficult. This means the kitchen area may not be available when you need it.

Commissary Kitchen

Commissary kitchens are established commercial kitchens where foodservice providers can go to prepare and store their food. Some commissary kitchens cater specifically to food trucks and mobile food businesses, while others may be businesses that just rent out their kitchen space for some extra income. No real rules and guidelines. It can be quite chaotic. These kitchens may not offer support, resources or information about operating your business.

Private Commercial Kitchen

If you need access to specialized equipment or more time and space to work, a private kitchen might be the right fit for your cottage food or small batch food business.

Non-Traditional Commercial Kitchen Sources

There are other spaces that have kitchens for rent that you can also consider. Churches, social clubs, schools, bed and breakfast establishments and retirement communities all have kitchens that are up to code and may have commercial-grade equipment, and these businesses may be willing to rent out their space during off hours. Like renting a restaurant's kitchen space, these non-traditional locations are a great way to save on your rent costs while gaining access to a large commercial kitchen with equipment, but they won't offer as many amenities as a standard shared-use or incubator kitchen.

Interview Questions

What is the cost for renting the facility? Is it by the day or by the hour?

What is the inspection history of this commercial kitchen? (If you notice that the health department often shuts down this commercial kitchen or commissary, your business may be negatively impacted.)

Are cleaning and disposal facilities available?

Interview Questions

Does the commercial kitchen have dumpsters and recycling facilities?

Do you simply need a space to store food and cook/bake, or would you prefer a place that can help you obtain the proper permits, certifications, supplies, or truck wraps? Do you need help in starting your business?

Does the kitchen have time slots available for the hours you need on a regular basis?

Interview Questions

What storage space is available for your equipment or dry, refrigerated, or frozen foods? Will there be additional cost for refrigerated and/or frozen foods?

What liability insurance is required? Are there other business licenses and requirements needed before being allowed to use the commercial kitchen? Is there an application process? What would cause a commercial kitchen to deny you use of the facility?

How is private equipment brought into the kitchen and ingredients secured from theft?

Interview Questions

What additional services do commercial kitchens offer that's included in the rental fees?

Is business consultation and support available to the kitchen participants? Is there an extra cost for these services?

Is there assistance in marketing, brokering, distribution of your products, recipe/formula development and is there office space available?

Interview Questions

What type of training, if any, is offered at the kitchen facility?

Is the kitchen facility as interested in your success as their own?