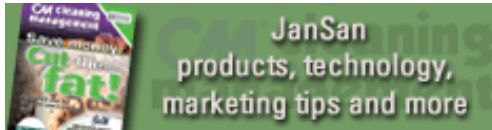


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How to tackle dirty kitchen jobs

by Robert Kravitz

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, employees at a catering kitchen complained to government authorities about ants and roaches roaming freely. When investigators followed up on the complaints, what they found was even worse than what they had expected.

"In my 15 years of inspection, this was the dirtiest kitchen I'd ever seen," said Jose Rodriguez, one of the investigators.

Food-preparation surfaces and kitchen equipment were filthy, drains were clogged with dirt, floor and ceiling tiles were grimy, and freezers, coolers, and ranges were covered in grease.

Authorities closed the kitchen for a complete cleaning. Once it reopened, the owners were required to file weekly cleaning reports and were subjected to regular — and random — inspections for one year.

Although this is an extreme example of poor commercial kitchen maintenance, it cannot be denied that cleaning commercial kitchens is a tough, demanding job. However, it can be made easier — and cleaner — by following these steps:

Wear protective gear

Because commercial kitchen cleaning is usually very dirty and the cleaning chemicals used are so powerful, proper protective gear should be worn. This includes gloves, goggles and rubber shoes that adhere to wet floor surfaces.

Organize

Organization is key — tools should be readily available and in proper working order. Commercial kitchen cleaning is labor-intensive; time wasted finding cleaning tools or fixing equipment once the job has commenced makes the task frustrating and hinders productivity.

Work from top to bottom



Nix kitchen grease and grime with a no-touch system.

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It is not unusual to find food, crumbs, grease and other debris on ceilings, walls and counters. Wipe these areas clean first before attending to lower surfaces to prevent resoiling.

Grills, filters and controls

A quick way to clean grills, filters, controls and knobs is to place them in the dishwasher. Many restaurants have short-cycle dishwashers that clean using very hot water, which melts grease and grime on these items and then washes it away.

Attend to floors

Floors are critical in commercial kitchens. They are usually covered with grease and debris by the end of the day and can present a real slip and fall hazard if not well maintained. Also, they are often the first area examined by restaurant inspectors.

An efficient way to clean commercial kitchen floors — as well as ceilings, walls and fixtures — is by using a spray-and-blow-dry system, also known as a no-touch cleaning system.

The first step in using this cleaning system involves sweeping large debris from the floor. The machine will apply cleaning chemicals to all surfaces, and degreaser to dissolve grease and grime.

The machine can then vacuum all soiled water from the floor, leaving the kitchen floor dry, eliminating any slip/fall hazards.

If a spray-and-blow-dry or no-touch system is not available, the entire floor area must be thoroughly swept clean first, then mopped, and finally rinsed. It is also important to remove all cleaning residue because it can make the floor slippery. Allow at least 30 minutes for the floor to air-dry.

Robert Kravitz, president, AlturaSolutions Communications, Chicago, is a former building service contractor and author of four books about the JanSan industry.

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