



How to Clean a Commercial Ice Machine

Source: GoFoodService.com

The average American buys 4 bags of ice per year. Online party planner websites recommend one pound of ice per person for a picnic, more if you need to chill drinks. Restaurants plan on three pounds per bar stool and a pound-and-a-half for each chair.

Our love of crystal clear ice and cold drinks is unparalleled in the world. For that reason, a commercial ice machine is one of the most important pieces of equipment in any foodservice organization. Ice comes in contact with every single employee and customer.

Keep your commercial ice maker in tiptop condition with regular cleaning. Read on for our how-to guide.

Why Clean Your Commercial Ice Machine Regularly?

Commercial ice machine cleaning is regulated by the Food and Drug Administration for large manufacturers of packaged ice. Ice is considered food. Specifically, the FDA inspects

- the plumbing to prevent contamination of the water supply or ice,
- the safety and sanitation of the water supply

Local health departments oversee ice machines in hospitals, restaurants, hotels, and stores. Regulations are similar to the FDA guidelines.

Commercial ice machines harbor dangerous bacterial growth and contamination if not cleaned properly. Frequent cleaning prevents the formation of biofilm. Biofilm protects harmful organisms, and once established, is difficult and expensive to remove.

Machines need maintenance to operate at peak efficiency. For equipment as vital as your ice maker, this is especially true.

Clean Your Ice Machine Every Six Months or Sooner

Consult your manual for the manufacturer's recommended interval. At a minimum, clean a commercial ice maker every six months. Regular cleaning is part of the maintenance process for trouble-free operation.

Times between cleanings vary between different brands, models, and use. Signs you need to clean your ice machine:

- Ice quantity is smaller than normal
- Ice is cloudy
- Ice is partially formed
- Has a strange taste or odor

The cleaning procedure removes mineral deposits, lime, and scale. It includes exterior maintenance such as filter changes, heat coil dust removal, and rust treatment. The sanitizing procedure removes harmful pathogens, algae, and biofilm.

Follow Your Manufacturer's Recommendation and Local Health Codes

Ice machine cleaning methods vary. Some commercial ice makers have automatic cleaning cycles. Other machines require manual disassembly and cleaning.

Review documentation before starting the cleaning process. The correct process is essential to maintain food safety. Use the recommended cleaning solution and sanitizer.

Use of the wrong solution can damage your machine or leave a dangerous biofilm intact. In most cases, all you need are several soft, clean cloths and a special cleaning solution made for ice machines. Ice machine cleaner is nickel-free and 30% or less phosphoric acid.

The General Cleaning Process

Manufacturer's instructions may vary. Follow manufacturers' instructions to preserve warranty coverage.

- Empty all ice from the reservoir
- Begin the automatic cleaning cycle
- Add ice maker cleaner per the manufacturers' recommendation
- Let the clean cycle complete.

- At the end of the cycle, disconnect the machine from the power supply
- Remove ice machine components and soak in a mixture of cleaner solution and water
- Clean internal ice machine components per manufacturers' instructions
- Mix a lukewarm solution of cleaner and water. Refer to your machine's documentation for the right ratio.
- Most solutions start to foam when in contact with lime, scale, and mineral deposits.
- Use a soft-bristle nylon brush, scrubber, or cloth to carefully clean all parts and then rinse with clean water.
- Use the diluted cleaning solution to clean all surfaces of the ice machine, reservoir, and dispenser. Use a nylon brush or scrubber to clean the base, sides, plastic parts of the evaporator, trough, reservoir, and dispenser.

Follow the cleaning cycle with a sanitizing solution before reassembly. Cleaning and sanitizing steps safeguard public health.

Sanitizing Your Ice Machine

Here are the steps for sanitizing your ice machine.

- Dilute the sanitizer solution with water to the correct ratio
- Use a spray bottle or soak the removed parts with the solution
- Do not rinse parts with water after sanitizing
- Use a spray bottle to liberally cover all food handling surfaces with sanitizer
- Replace all removed components
- Wait the recommended time for the disinfectant to work
- Connect the ice machine to power
- Start the automatic clean cycle
- Let the water trough refill and add sanitizer to the water trough
- Set your machine to start making ice

Clean the exterior, vents, and condenser coils while the ice machine completes its first ice cycle.

How to Clean the Exterior

Clean the exterior of your machine with a damp cloth or mild dish soap solution daily to prevent build-up. Do not use abrasives, corrosive, or chlorine solutions. They can damage the finish.

Use compressed air to blow dust from the coils or use a vacuum cleaner with a soft brush. Remove the air filter and wash it with soap and water. Let the filter dry before replacing it.

Replace the Water Filters

On average you should change the water filters every 6 months unless the filter system says otherwise. Clogged filters reduce water quality and quantity. You can learn more about water filters by checking out our Water Filter Guide.

Always Have Clean, Clear Ice

A commercial ice machine is a vital part of your foodservice organization. Regular cleaning and sanitation keep your ice maker running with maximum efficiency. Your local health department and manufacturers' recommendations suggest cleaning every 6 months or sooner.

Use only specialized ice machine cleaners and sanitizers. The wrong solutions or chemical combinations can leave dangerous biofilms. Biofilms allow the rapid growth of pathogens. Regular cleaning removes mineral deposits, scale, and prevents biofilm buildup. The result is clean, safe ice. It tastes good, too.

Source: GoFoodService.com

www.gofoodservice.com/blog/how-to-clean-a-commercial-ice-machine