



employee injuries, poor filtration practices, inconsistent food quality and inefficient oil usage.

Using Oil Until It's "Done Its Time"

Take it from Carl Ferland. A longtime Denny's employee and owner of 42 Denny's units across the Southeastern U.S. Ferland says, **"Before I used an automated oil management system we relied on a manual process where we'd pour 35-pound jugs of oil by hand into our hot fryers and then cook the food until we thought the grease 'had done its time.'"**

Kevin Coveney, another Denny's franchisee with units in Central Ohio, had a similar experience. **"We tried to filter our oil twice a day using a roll-up filter box, but unless I actually went to the restaurants and followed the employees around, I had no way of really knowing whether they actually filtered the oil – or how they did it."**

The franchisees' employees struggled with the manual process. Kitchen staff followed a practice of rotating oil from one fryer to the next, and followed specific disposal intervals regardless of actual oil quality. To filter, employees dumped the hot oil from the fryer through a paper filter and into a large bucket and then back into the fryer. This difficult and dangerous process was easy for employees to postpone or simply avoid.

Fried food quality hinges on using fresh, quality oil. Without consistent oil filtration, foodservice owners have no assurance that their food will live up to guests' taste expectations. And all too often, restaurant managers discover that employees aren't filtering oil as often, or for as long, as they should be. It's almost as common to find employees skipping the filtration process entirely, disposing of costly oil prematurely in a wasteful attempt to protect food quality.

Manual Filtration and Disposal Invites Danger – and Liability

Compounding the tediousness of manual filtering is the danger involved in a manual oil disposal process where employees haul buckets of used oil outside to a rendering tank. Too often, the perfect storm of slippery floors, hot grease, and heavy buckets results in employee falls, burns and back strains.

Denny's Franchisees Don't Fear the Fryer

Two franchisees switch to automated oil management for consistent quality – and operational savings.

From golden-fried shrimp to crispy chicken fingers, fried food is here to stay. Deep-fried cuisines are a staple for the fast-casual restaurant, and in some locations account for about 30 percent of menu items.

While deep fryers are a wonderful invention, managing the oil – from its purchase and receipt to storage, filtration and disposal – can be a recurring nightmare for foodservice management and employees.

Restaurateurs who depend on hourly employees to carry out this key operations component are likely to face



“Like every owner/operator using a manual process, I’ve seen injuries directly related to oil disposal – burns, slips, falls,” Coveney recalls. **“We hauled used grease in buckets, still hot out of the fryer, to 55 gallon barrels out the back door of the restaurant for the grease guy. It was a big mess and created a lot of liability.”**

Ferland has also witnessed tragic accidents related to oil spills. **“I’ve seen cooks burn themselves while handling hot grease – and their hands will never look the same,”** he says.

Preventing Degradation of Food Quality

Maintaining food quality standards is a high priority for Ferland. As he explains, **“I made the decision to switch from manual oil handling to ensure that our guests were consistently served high quality fried food – not dark brown.”**

Coveney began considering an automated oil management solution after hearing about the success of another Denny’s franchisee. **“He was testing the Restaurant Technologies solution and getting tremendous results,”** he recalls.

Quality was the tipping point for Coveney as well. Understandably, cost savings were equally important, since fryer oil is one of a restaurant’s costliest commodities.

“It’s all about quality for me,” says Coveney. **“But, I was also hoping for an automated system that essentially pays for itself – along with the benefits of improved safety, cleanliness and operational efficiencies.”** He adds, **“It turns out that I got much more than that.”**

One-Touch Oil Management System

Both owners enlisted the help of Restaurant Technologies and now are reaping the benefits of an automated oil management system – as are their employees. And according to Ferland, employees couldn’t be happier with the one-touch system: **“They told me they couldn’t imagine going back to the old way.”**

Coveney’s employees love the ease: **“It really is a one-touch system and makes their lives so much easier and safer,”** he says.

The Total Oil Management System includes two tanks that are generally placed in the back of the restaurants’ kitchen: one for fresh oil and one for waste oil, as well as a secure outdoor fill box. Fresh and waste oil lines run between the

fryer and tanks inside to the exterior fill box eliminating the need for employees to manually fill or dispose of fryer oil.

Because the entire system is automated, employees simply push a button to start the filtration process. When oil needs to be replaced, they push a button to automatically pump out the old oil into the waste oil tank, and then add fresh oil into the fryer via a fill wand.

Managers are no longer in the dark about oil management. They receive email alerts when the oil has been improperly filtered or when it has been disposed of prematurely.

Because the automated system and exception alerts encourage filtering and deter premature disposal, it extends oil life by significantly reducing oil usage and driving bottom line cost savings. **“With the Restaurant Technologies’ system I’m saving 30 percent on my oil costs with only three stores,”** says Coveney. **“And our food quality has definitely improved.”** Implementing the automated solution has also lowered his workers compensation premiums.

Many of Ferland’s stores are also using less oil. **“We are saving money in locations that were throwing away their oil too frequently, and filtration monitoring is helping us to extend the life of our fryer oil,”** he says. After a year of great results from one location, Ferland decided to extend the solution across all 42 of his stores.

These days, neither Ferland’s nor Coveney’s restaurant managers worry about employees complying with oil filtration SOPs (standard operating procedures). Coveney says, **“Now that employees are being held accountable, they are adhering to SOPs. And because it’s so easy, they’ve embraced the new system – we have high compliance levels. I have one store that’s at 100 percent compliance.”**

Building the Brand

Sales in fast-casual dining chains increased by 13 percent in 2012, with the largest chains growing by 16 percent and industry analysts predict the growth trend will continue. But, no owner/operator can afford to ride the coattails of a trend.

Paying attention to the fundamentals – from food quality, employee safety and store cleanliness to efficient, cost-effective operations – is key to sustaining growth and profitability. Says Ferland, **“We’re always looking to grow the brand. The solution helps us deliver better food to our guests, and that’s what keeps bringing them back.”**