

# KFC — NORTHWEST RESTAURANTS

Less Mess and More Safety for  
KFC/Taco Bell/A&W Franchisee



## Results

- **Cleanliness and safety:** Keeping NRI's restaurants cleaner with one condensed, enclosed oil management system has kept messes to a minimum and enhanced safety.
- **Quality and consistency:** The Restaurant Technologies system has helped NRI improve product quality and helped managers become better at polishing and filtering.
- **Operational efficiency:** The system has helped the company become more operationally efficient and not have to spend time constantly checking shortening levels.
- **Grease Lock:** Restaurant Technologies' new Grease Lock feature has helped NRI standardize filters and reduce the number of hood cleanings each year.

When you're in the fast-food restaurant business mixing it up with the product's three main ingredients — water, flour and shortening — things are bound to get messy.

This was the case for Northwest Restaurants Inc., a family owned company founded in 1994 with the acquisition of 13 Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurants in Washington state. The company grew by acquiring restaurants in Oregon, Idaho, North and South Carolina, and Utah. NRI currently owns and operates 187 restaurant locations, including Kentucky Fried Chicken, Taco Bell and A & W brands.

Franchisee vice president Chris Basinger said, "Let's face it. KFC kitchens aren't easy to keep clean especially in the cooking areas where you have flour, water and shortening all coming together."

The time had come, Basinger said, to find a solution for the cleanliness issues inherent in this type of environment. One of the first stops was at an industry trade show and convention where NRI learned about Restaurant Technologies' comprehensive oil management system.

Basinger said, "The franchise community does a lot of information sharing. We talk to different franchisees to see what kinds of systems they're using, how they like them, and so on. You get to see how the equipment works, how big it is, how the fill systems work, and see the equipment up close."

A few months later, NRI was invited to go see the Restaurant Technologies system at work at a competitor's location. "We were able to walk through and talk to the manager, and we liked what we saw. It took us a little time to get there, but once we did, we felt really good about it."





NRI initially tested Restaurant Technologies' oil management system in six locations and got positive feedback so moved forward with installation in several other locations. Basinger said, "We always do a three- to six-month test, with side-by-side comparisons, looking at the shortening line on the P & L from store to store, and then talking with employees and managers about the system. Our managers liked the ease of the system. They don't have to worry about ordering shortening...it literally shows up in the middle of the night for them."

## Cleanliness and Safety

But enhancing cleanliness and safety were at the top of the goals list for NRI, and Restaurant Technologies met the challenge. "We think this has been the biggest impact for us with the Restaurant Technologies oil management systems. Being able to keep the area a lot cleaner with one condensed, enclosed system has really helped keep the shortening from spilling or splashing or mixing in with other stuff when changing it," Basinger said.

It has allowed the franchisee to clean up their outdoor area as well by letting them get rid of the grease bins in the dumpster areas and keeping the dumpster areas cleaner. Basinger said, "We used to pressure wash our dumpster areas once a month and now we're doing it once a quarter. It is definitely better from a customer experience perspective."

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And, of course, with cleaner work areas come safer work areas. “Using the Restaurant Technologies oil management system can help you avoid the thing you most don’t want to happen. That was a turning point for us. We did have an accident at one of our locations where the employee was dumping old shortening outside into the grease bin. So we knew we needed to figure out how to never handle hot grease again,” Basinger said.

## Quality and Consistency

In the fast-food restaurant industry, shortening clearly has a huge impact on the quality and consistency of all products. Before installing the Restaurant Technologies system, NRI used a feeder system starting with one end fryer and feeding oil down the line.

**“We think cleanliness and safety have been the biggest impact for us with the Restaurant Technologies oil management system.”**

Basinger said, “So you ended up only putting new shortening into the front fryer. If some stores improperly rotated, you would always have a couple of fryers that would be using super old shortening and those would often be the ones you were cooking in unfortunately.

“The new system is so easy to use. You just top off, rotate over and the product comes out with better quality overall. It has helped us in a lot of different ways. It has made the managers who were good at rotating and executing the polishing and filtering processes even better. And it has made others who were not as focused be focused a little more.”

## Operational Efficiency

After a rough year or so due to COVID and the resultant tight labor market, the Restaurant Technologies oil management system was helpful especially during labor shortages, Basinger said.

“Now we don’t need as many employees changing fryers. We’re not running out of shortening. And since we look at the cook position at the restaurants as the most critical position, it is also critical for those guys to be efficient back there,” he said.

**“We don’t have to worry about getting every drop out of every jug.”**

“Specifically, the system eases the rotation and how and when we top off the shortening in the morning and after the lunch rush. After that, we don’t worry about shortening the rest of the evening,” Basinger said. “It helps us going into dinner not having to worry if a fryer is low or we’re running out of shortening. We don’t have to spend time running around checking shortening levels. We don’t have to worry about getting every drop out of every jug.”

Basinger also said from a financial perspective, the system took the company’s shortening costs from 2% to 1.5%, as well as helping with trash hauling costs and then, of course, with workers compensation costs.

“Every little bit helps the bottom line each month, which can add up to a big difference.” he said.



## Grease Lock: First Line of Defense

NRI also made the decision to install a new Restaurant Technologies feature: the Grease Lock patented disposable filter pad and metal frame. Grease Lock takes the place of traditional baffle filters. It features a unique heat-resistant fiber, designed to deliver exceptional grease filtration. The feature reduces the risk of flames entering the hood and flue, as well as reducing the frequency of hood cleaning, maintenance on the roof, and baffle filter cleaning.

Basinger said, “We tested Grease Lock in six of our good-volume restaurants for six months and got feedback from our managers on a regular basis. It was an opportunity to move the bar forward on the filter side. It allows you to standardize filters in all of your stores. In those six stores, we have reduced the number of hood cleanings from three times a year to twice a year cleanings. And we’ll continue to monitor it.”

Basinger said, “I would encourage any franchisee group to try the Restaurant Technologies oil management system. Not only are you going to save in costs, but it is a huge employee morale deal. They like it, the managers like it, and it’s a product that helps managers avoid having to order and re-order. It’s as easy as a Wi-Fi signal going out and your shortening being delivered automatically in the next 24 to 48 hours! There is no cost to install the system other than a 4-plex plug, and then you forget about it. I couldn’t encourage people more to go ahead and try it. Honestly!”

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FOOD QUALITY



EFFICIENCY



SAFETY



SUSTAINABILITY

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