



# Soft Serve Frozen Yogurt Business Guide



- *Opening a Self-Serve Frozen Yogurt Concept Store*
- *Equipment Needed List*
  - *Sample Financials*
  - *Sample Store Layouts*
- *Pricing and Menu Strategies*
- *National Supplier Listings*

**A Complete Business Planning Guide**



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*First let's start with the legal stuff the lawyers make us say.*

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## SOFT SERVE FROZEN YOGURT BUSINESS GUIDE

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Why do we give away valuable information for free? You might think there's a catch, but all we ask is that you consider us as your equipment supplier. With that, we hope you enjoy this guide and find the information useful.

In the 80's and early 90's, soft serve frozen yogurt was a hot item. It was everywhere. Over time, the market matured and eventually became saturated. Frozen Yogurt started to gradually decline in the late 90's and settled into a treat you could still find, but not as easily.

Flash forward to the past few years...Frozen Yogurt franchises like TCBY, Pinkberry, Red Mango, and a host of others are doing a bang-up business.

You're probably reading this because you've been to a self serve frozen yogurt shop and seen that it's doing good volume and looks like a relatively easy business. You want in on the action and I can't blame you one bit.

The hip self serve frozen yogurt concept is simple:

- Between 8 and 16 flavors of low fat, non-fat and tart frozen yogurt flavors
- a variety of berry and exotic real fresh-cut fruit toppings in addition to cereal and cookies and other candy toppings
- curvy counter and furniture; accented with colorful hip floors and wall coverings
- Plasma TV's showing something "cool" like music videos
- Plasma TV's above the counter with an animated menu
- Customers grab a big cup, pick their favorite flavors and toppings and create their very own dessert masterpiece. Then they walk up to the register, put the cup on the scale, and swipe their card. This customer control of the process is key to making it fun. It also keeps the line moving fast and reduces labor costs.

The self serve frozen yogurt concept is firmly entrenched in the US market and growing internationally. If you have the money or have access to financing, it's a great business to get into. One shop can make you a decent living, but it's best to look at the venture with a goal of operating 3 or 4 (or more) stores in any given territory if the opportunity is there.

You might be asking yourself, "this all sounds great... but what if the market becomes saturated again, and the market softens like it did in the late 90's"?



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I understand the concern. Part of the difference between now and back then is that they weren't running the self serve concept. As I mentioned above, the beauty of the self serve concept is that you have a reduced labor expense, can move a line very fast and people love to create their own treat.

The other piece of good news for those planning a store these days is that there was an explosion of self serve yogurt store openings between 2010 and 2014. If you can picture yourself planning a store back then, you were looking at your city and thinking, great, no competition. The problem was, there were about 5 other people thinking the exact same thing, at the same time. They all opened within months of each other, creating a big competitive problem. Naturally, many stores did not make it. Why is this good news for you today? Because in the past, people were writing checks for well over \$100k that were just for machines. Today, you can buy lightly used equipment for far less, and give yourself a MUCH better chance of making money and a MUCH quicker payback on your investment. In other words, a much lower risk venture. Nobody wants to lose money, but if the venture doesn't work out, you can resell the equipment and take a much smaller hit. And your chances of making it a little money machine are much higher because the industry has gone through its "weeding out" process. There is no more "stupid money" fueling an unrealistic number of store openings, meaning less competition for you.

At [TurnKeyParlor.com](http://TurnKeyParlor.com), we want to help you choose the right concept for your specific situation. We can help guide and keep you from making basic mistakes.

Reading this guide is stage 1 of your business planning. Once you have done basic research, you might want to consider our higher level consulting services. But the truth is, if you call and talk to us, we will provide as much free information as possible. Most people can get learn what they need to know by doing their own research and having a few Q&A phone sessions with us. It's not rocket science.

[TurnKeyParlor.com](http://TurnKeyParlor.com) offers the best prices on soft serve machines and other key equipment pieces. Volume discounts DO apply. As does service, set up and machine training.

Let's get a little deeper into what's out there today, and what it takes to start and run one these businesses.



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## The Players

- 3 Options – Franchises, Licensing deals or Straight Purchase with no strings attached.

## Franchises:

**Legal Disclaimer:** This information is not a franchise offering for any of the companies listed below and should not be construed as such. We have gathered this data independently and do not guarantee nor assume liability for incorrect data. We recommend that if anyone is seriously interested in pursuing any of these franchise opportunities, that they review that franchise's Federal Disclosure Document (FDD) with an attorney and accountant.

The franchise route – Is it the safest bet? Maybe, but definitely the most expensive.

Who's out there?

### Menchie's

100% Self Serve Concept

Maybe the cream of the crop. Great floor designs - worth looking at in person to see what they are doing. Great fresh fruit topping bars, great looking candy topping displays.

Total Investment: \$340,000-\$400,000

Initial Franchise Fee: \$40,000

Royalty Fee: Not available (we believe it is around 6%)

Advertising Fee: Not available

#### Franchise Units

Year	U.S. Franchises	Canadian Franchises	Foreign Franchises	Company Owned
2010	38	0	0	4
2009	12	0	0	3

### Red Mango

Primarily Full Serve Concept, moving toward Self Serve Concept

Total Investment: \$264,500-\$435,000

Initial Franchise Fee: \$25,000-\$35,000



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Royalty Fee: 6%

Advertising Fee: up to 4%

Term of Agreement: 10 years

**Franchise Units**

Year	U.S. Franchises	Canadian Franchises	Foreign Franchises	Company Owned
2010	65	0	0	1
2009	48	0	0	5
2008	36	0	0	8
2007	8	0	0	1
2006	0	0	0	0

**Yogurtland**

Self Serve Concept

Total Investment: \$350,000-\$400,000

Initial Franchise Fee: \$35,000

Royalty Fee: 6%

Marketing Fee: up to 2%

Term of Agreement: 10 years

**Franchise Units**

Year	U.S. Franchises	Canadian Franchises	Foreign Franchises	Company Owned
2010	85	0	5	6
2009	57	0	2	4
2008	25	0	0	3
2007	1	0	0	2
2006	N/A	N/A	N/A	1

**Freshberry – Self Serve**

Total investment: \$165,750 - \$386,200

Franchise fee: \$25,000

Ongoing royalty fee: 6%

Term of agreement: Term of agreement not renewable

**Franchise Units**



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Year	U.S. Franchises	Canadian Franchises	Foreign Franchises	Company Owned
2010	16	0	11	0
2009	5	0	0	1
2008	0	0	0	1
2007	0	0	0	0

### **Orange Leaf –**

100% Self Serve Concept

A solid player, with a relatively small initial franchise fee.

Total Investment: \$210,000-\$356,500

Initial Franchise Fee: \$12,000

Royalty Fee: Not available

Advertising Fee: Not available

### **Pinkberry**

Arguably the most established successful franchise.

Primarily Full Serve Concept, moving toward Self Serve Concept

Seems to have much more stringent requirements, starting with:

Minimum Liquidity: \$400,000 (\$200,000 per store)

Minimum Net Worth: \$800,000 (\$400,000 per store)

Total Investment per store: \$300 - \$450,000 per store

Initial Franchise Fee: \$45,000

Royalty Fee: 6%

Advertising Fee: 2% local +2% Nat'l

### **Licensing**

This is “almost” a franchise deal, but with more flexibility. You basically buy a name brand and the concepts.

Tuttifrutti for example, charges a \$25,000 fee and zero ongoing royalties. For this, you get to use their name, the designs, marketing tools, etc. They also help you with machines, layouts, etc.

This is an attractive concept, but you are limited in your territory and have to shell out cash for every store you open. In other words, you pay \$25k and they help you get the first store open. If you want to open a second store, that fee might be \$20k,



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then \$18k for the 3<sup>rd</sup> store and so on.

Like the franchise concept, it is comforting to have a group behind you with the “know-how” to get you started without having to reinvent the wheel.

But don't be misled. You will need your own architect, contractor, etc. TuttiFrutti will simply help you determine what a good location is, and act as consultants. The key services that architects and contractors provide are out of your pocket in addition to the \$25k licensing fee.

In summary, this seems like a pretty good deal, but beware. Make sure you know what kind of pricing you are going to pay for the product mix, etc.

## **STRAIGHT PURCHASE:**

(True Independence) - No money down, no royalties

Going forward as an independent is one of the most attractive choices. After all, how hard can it be? Do you really want to be fully committed to any type of contract that limits your territory, creativity and makes you sign an iron clad contract that seems to protect everyone but you? That sounds harsh, but you really need to watch what you sign if not going the independent route.

There are suppliers out there who will sell you frozen yogurt liquid mix or powder. The liquid mix is the easiest to deal with. Simply pour the mix into the hopper and that's it. The machine does the rest.

Top choices for liquid mix out there are:

- YoCream
- Honey Hill Farms
- Dreyer's/Edy's

Top Choices for dry mix include:

- Nanci's
- Pregel
- Cielo



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There are also some very good **regional powder and liquid suppliers**. I suggest you get as many samples as you can from the different players, run the product in your machines and test, test, test. After that, you can decide what would be your best bet. Some people even use a combination of suppliers, both powder and liquid.

- **Product Cost and Suggested Selling Prices**

## **Liquid vs. Powder Mixes**

### **Advantages of Powder:**

- Dry Storage - No need for storage equipment that requires electricity
- Theoretically easier to source - no need for supplier to have frozen distribution capabilities

### **Disadvantages of Powder:**

- Might be more expensive than buying frozen liquid mix
- You need more ingredients - skim milk, filtered water
- Takes longer - need to mix it - about 15-20 minutes per batch
- Labor intensive - employee needs to mix
- Consistency can be a problem. If mixed by different employees, they might make each make it slightly a different tasting product.

How does the powder product work?

- In short, employee uses approximately one pound of dry mix, corresponding amount of flavoring mix, 2 gallons of skim milk and  $\frac{3}{4}$  gallon of filtered water. Put all this in a food grade plastic 5 gallon bucket and mix with a free standing motorized mixer.

The above will yield approximately 3 gallons of product, which is the

appropriate size hopper for a typical self serve shop.

## LIQUID MIXES

Advantages of liquid (frozen, then defrosted) mix:

- Less labor necessary - just pour mix into machine
- More consistent - pre-mix at factory means you don't have to worry about flavor variations
- Less materials - no need to source skim milk on a regular basis or worry about filtered water sourcing
- Possibly less costly than using powder

## Disadvantages of Liquid Mix

- Need freezer and refrigerated storage to manage inventory

## **Topping Costs** – (the million dollar question!)

Fruit, candy, etc.

The toppings will definitely cost you more than the yogurt. A range is between .10 and .40 cents per ounce – so be very careful in what toppings you choose to offer, since your retail price per ounce is fixed (average range 35 to 50 cents per ounce).

The other “wild card” or “million dollar question” is what the ratio of yogurt to toppings is for the typical customer. In other words, if you're paying 7 cents an ounce for the yogurt and 20 cents an ounce for the topping, you will be a lot more profitable if the customer goes mostly with yogurt. The good news is that they do. A typical breakdown of yogurt/topping is 75% yogurt 25% topping.

After you've been open for a month, you will have a much clearer picture of your ratio. Upon further analysis, you can decide if you need to raise the per ounce retail price a few pennies.

Where to buy toppings? Costco, Sams, Restaurant Depot, Target, Walmart, Grocery store, etc. Basically, find somewhere that is convenient to buy from on a daily basis and sells candy and fresh fruit at the low prices.

- Average serving sizes
  - Typical ring is 8 ounces. At .45 per ounce = \$3.60

- **FINANCIALS**

- **Please understand that these figures are designed primarily to give you something of a framework for which to work from, but are in no way a specific example of what you will make from the venture.**

- **Overhead Examples**

- Labor Costs – These are really tough to nail down and are subject to a wide range of factors. For the purposes of this guide, figure anywhere from \$7,500 to \$15k per month in labor. About \$7,300 a month for an average store doing about \$350,000 a year. A good rule of thumb for labor is about 25-30% of sales.
- Figure 3 total employees at one time in store, store open 70 hours a week. This can be trimmed down if sales are really weak on certain days or times.

Breakdown:

One employee working register, one manning machine back room and keeping toppings full, one on floor as “info” person, keeping machines, floor and tables clean. Floor employee explains process to new customers, controls customer “over sampling” and generally keeps things running smoothly. Reduced to 2 employees during slower hours of the day or slower day of the week.

Figure you need 3 employees on the floor for 6 of the 10 hours per day. Figure 2 employees for the other 4 of the 10 hours.

Total man hours per day as noted below:

3 employees for 6 hours = 18 hours

2 employees for 4 hours = 8 hours

26 hours at a blended hourly rate of \$12/hr = \$312 per day or \$2184 per week.

Possible pay breakout below\*:

- Manager (@\$15/hr)
- Supervisor (@\$12/hr)
- Full time customer servers (@10/hr)

○ Part timers (@ \$9/hr)

\*estimates – not a perfect science. Per hour pay includes FICA costs

A first year profit and loss statement could potentially look like this (basic model):

Annual Sales (\$1000/day for 350 days)*	\$ 350,000
Cost of Goods (Yogurt and Toppings)	\$ 87,500 (about 25% of sales)
Gross Profit	<b>\$ 262,500</b>
Labor (about 25% of sales)	\$ 87,500
Rent (\$3500/mo)	\$ 42,000
Bank Loan/Interest (\$3000/mo)	\$ 36,000
Utilities (\$1500/mo)	\$ 18,000
Miscellaneous	\$ 5,000
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>(\$ 188,500)</b>
<b>Annual Profit for owner</b>	<b>\$ 74,000</b>

These are all **very rough numbers**, but to do \$1000 in a 10 hour day, you would need to sell 2,200 ounces, at \$.45 per ounce. At an average of 8 ounces per customer, you would need about 275 customers, or about 27 customers per hour. Again, these are rough numbers and can be tweaked by adding more hours to the day, etc.

Keep in mind that as an owner/operator, your net pay would be higher since you would be paying yourself the manager salary as well as the profit.

We've heard that there are stores out there doing \$500k to \$750k. We have also heard of stores that do as little as \$500 a day (\$175k per year) a day and can still make a small profit. This is an example on the extreme low end of the spectrum, but for a small town store with a limited investment (used equipment), it can be done. The stores doing the bigger numbers are paying more rent and labor and are in higher traffic, more affluent locations.

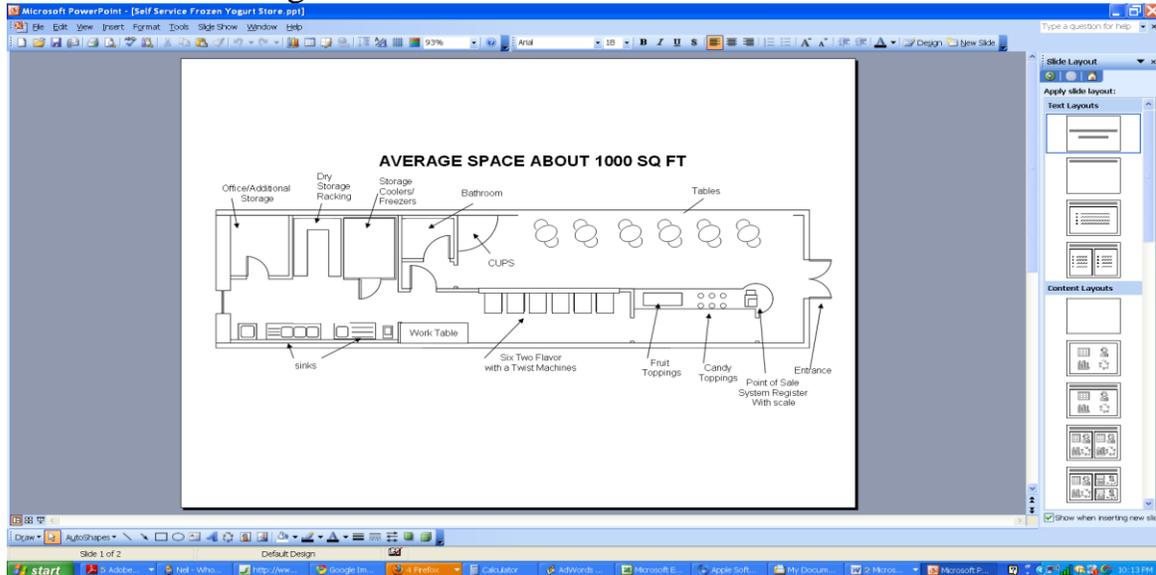
● **Rent/Location**

- All over the place of course. Dependent on a ton of different factors. Can range from \$10 a sq ft. to \$50 a sq ft.
- Typical space requires a minimum of 600 sq ft. maximum of 2000 sq ft. Average store about 1200 sq ft.



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- If a store is 1000 sq ft at \$30/sq ft, then the monthly rent is  $\$1000 \times \$30 = \$30,000$  divide by 12 months = \$2500/mo
  - Utilities – Again, tough to say because it depends on how many machines, etc. But an average store’s power bill will run around \$1,000.
  - An average store will need a 300 amp panel. It can be done with 200 amps, but that is a little tight



## Machines and Key Equipment:

Machines- What brands work best? See our review toward the end of this section If you haven’t read our free machine guide, you should. Click [HERE](#) To get the most recent, updated guide emailed to you instantly. Its simple and easy to read and will keep you from making a mistake, which happens often to people.

**Note:** At TurnKeyParlor.com, we are equipment DEALERS not Manufacturers.

Why is this important and what does it mean to you?

To begin with, we are a neutral party. In other words, when you call Taylor, Stoelting, Electro Freeze, Donper, or Spaceman, - you are only going to get one side of the story. The machine business is a cut throat business. All of these manufacturers will do their best to sell you their brand and bash the others. It’s just a fact and a normal everyday aspect of this business.

At TurnKeyParlor.com, we offer a VARIETY of brands and options. In other words,



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we are going to walk you through the pros and cons of each machine and even offer you USED machine options. This upsets the manufacturers because they want to sell new machines, but we are most interested in making sure our customers get the best deal possible. We want to match you and your concept with what makes the most sense. Basically, align the decision with your budget and goals. If you have a flexible budget, then brand new, high end machines might make the most sense for you. If you're trying open your first store with the lowest investment possible, we can help make that happen without you having to worry that you are making a mistake in picking your equipment.

Some of what I mention here will be obvious to many of you, but I'm writing this book with the thought that you have no idea at all about the equipment or the soft serve business.

When looking for a machine, one of the first things you have to consider is the machines capacity.

Capacity is almost always measured by how many servings per minute the machine yields. High volume machines can generally yield around 10 four ounce servings per minute. This is ideal if you have one machine at a concession where there is a long line and the machine is constantly being hit hard. It has to "recover" quickly.

**Medium volume machines** yield about 5 four ounce servings and low volume machines yield about 1 to 2 four ounce servings per minute.

For self serve operations with multiple machines, you don't need high volume machines. Medium volume machines are perfect for a self serve frozen yogurt store. It doesn't make sense to go with high capacity/volume machines because these require more power and will increase your overhead expenses unnecessarily.

Soft serve machines store liquid "mix" in the "hopper". This is typically on the top portion of the machine. Like 2 big tanks - you just pour mix into them on top. The liquid mix then feeds through a small tube into the barrel (or cylinder) to be frozen, and churned by a "dasher" or "beater". So the key compartments are - the hopper (mix is stored) and the cylinder (mix is frozen).

There are 2 refrigeration systems in the machine. One to keep the liquid mix refrigerated in the hopper, and one system to freeze the mix in the cylinder.

Key features on the newer machines that are critically important include "low mix alarms". If the barrel isn't full, the mix might freeze solid and this will keep the dasher from turning. A frozen barrel can cause the dasher bars to bend or worse, damage the compressor. If buying used machines, you don't want them to be too old, or you might miss out on key technologies that are needed in self serve stores.

The low mix alarm will shut down the compressor automatically if someone doesn't

respond to the low mix alarm. It will re-start periodically, but will keep shutting down until someone adds mix to the machine.

**Water cooled vs. Air Cooled.**

If you have good ventilation, you can go air cooled. If ventilation is an issue, water cooled is a better option. If you have more than 6 machines, there is a water cooled option called a “glycol system” which might be a good option. It’s not cheap at about \$15k, but it protects the machines and keeps your air conditioner from working overtime.

**Maintenance:**

Cleaning and sanitizing on a daily basis is never a bad idea being that you are dealing with a dairy product. Your local health inspector will tell you what the requirements are for your area. Stores with a lot of machines will clean 2 machines a day, so that they are cleaned, on average 2 or 3 times a week.

**Capacity** is almost always measured by how many servings per minute the machine yields. High volume machines can generally yield 7 four ounce servings per minute. This is ideal if you have one machine at a concession where there is a long line and the machine is constantly being hit hard. It has to “recover” quickly. Medium volume machines yield about 4 four ounce servings and low volume machines yield about 1 to 2 four ounce servings per minute.

**THREE PHASE vs. SINGLE PHASE:**

You can’t buy 3 phase machines if you don’t have 3 phase power in your location. There is single phase power everywhere, so you can’t make an electrical mistake buying 1 phase machines.

For self serve operations with multiple machines, you don’t need high volume machines. Medium volume machines are perfect for a self serve frozen yogurt store. It doesn’t make sense to go with high capacity/volume machines because these require more power and will increase your overhead unnecessarily.

Soft serve machines store “mix” in the “hopper”. The mix then goes into the barrel to be frozen, and churned by a “dasher”.

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respond to the low mix alarm. It will re-start periodically, but will keep shutting down until someone adds mix to the machine.

## RECOMMENDED MACHINE BRANDS



Stoelting



Taylor



ElectroFreeze

The 3 major American made brands are **Taylor, Stoelting and Electrofreeze**. We strongly suggest you stick to these 3 brands. Donper and Spaceman are 2 made in China brands that also make pretty good machines. But when you stack one of these against the “big 3” American made brands, you go American. The bottom line is there are great deals out there on used equipment and it doesn’t make sense to buy anything but the top 3 proven brands. Not only because they are better machines, but also because they generally deliver a better ice cream or yogurt. The other problem if you buy a china made machine is that you can’t be certain the company will be around for the long haul, therefore leaving you with a problem if they fold (can’t find parts, etc). So choose carefully. Talk to us. Again, if you go China made, stick to Donper or Spaceman, because both of those have pretty well established USA representation.

Again, we strongly recommend you stick to Taylor, Stoelting and Electrofreeze. We

have a wide selection of used machines are great prices, helping you limit your total investment. This increases the chance of reaching payback on your investment a lot faster, meaning greatly minimizing your risk.. You can buy used USA made machines for about half what they go for new. This can mean a savings of close to \$30k on a five machine purchase. So you really need to consider going used.

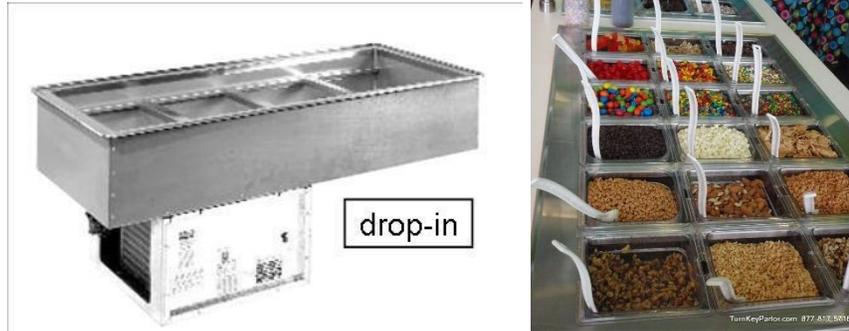
## Register/Scale POS system



It's key to have a POS (point of sale) system that has software specific to the self serve frozen yogurt business. Our recommended POS features a simple, intuitive menu, which is easy to learn and simple to work with. Customers place frozen yogurt cups on the integrated ounce point of sale scales, cashiers ring up the product, and the customer makes payment. With this convenient tool self serve frozen yogurt store business owners can focus on what is most important: their business and making their customers happy. Call or e-mail [TurnKeyParlor.com](http://TurnKeyParlor.com) to learn more about the right type of POS for your store.

## Drop in Refrigerated topping bar

Ever wonder how stores put together those nice little salad bar looking topping display's? Here's the answer. It's called a drop in, meaning it drops into a counter and has a refrigeration unit attached to the bottom of it. You can then drop/hang a series of pans for the fresh cut fruit and other toppings that require refrigeration.



Another option is an topping bar with under counter fridge and sneezeguard. We sell these too. For dry toppings, you can get creative. You can use acrylic containers with spoons or any other types of containers that make sense, or you can simply cut out holes in the counter like Yogurtland does and put a sneezeguard across the front.



## Location

- What works, what doesn't – You want a place that is comfortable. Easy to get in, plenty of parking. A place you can see a family sitting and relaxing with their frozen yogurt treat.
- Visibility is important
- Other eateries nearby are great to have. People finish their food and head over to the close by yogurt shop
- Malls are good, but not always. Need to make sure that the mall is open

during peak yogurt hours, which can go into the night

- Outdoor seating is a great plus

## **BIGGEST MISTAKES PEOPLE MAKE**

- Improper ventilation of machines – they will “under-perform” and die an early death
- “Too Much Machine” – People think that buying the biggest, most expensive machine is the way to go. It’s not. You can buy too much machine and suffer a utilities bill that is more than it needs to be. Or buying the wrong model, wrong electrical phase (3 phase vs. 1 phase) or wrong method of cooling the machines. All critical.
- Improper machine settings – yield crappy texture and taste. Not a good thing. You need to know how to set the machines to yield the product you want, and you need to keep controlling quality on a regular basis.
- Bad location – speaks for itself
- Not throwing away cut fruit that sits in pans too long. I see this often. A manager trying to control food costs keeps cut strawberries or whatever fruit in the pan so long that it looks like mush. These should be thrown away long before. In fact, they should be tossed if they don’t look SUPER fresh. Nothing will turn a customer off more than mushy fruit. In fact, a key to this business is exciting the customer’s senses with fruit that looks fit to be photographed and put on the cover of Bon Appetite.

I hope this guide has helped provide a basic understanding of what it takes to open a successful self serve frozen yogurt store. Please call or e-mail us if you would like to learn more about the business, the equipment and anything else we can help with. Call 877-817-5716 or email [equipment@turnkeyparlor.com](mailto:equipment@turnkeyparlor.com) to set up a free 15 minute consultation