



The Ice Cream Business for Beginners Guide

2024 EDITION



INTRODUCTION

Starting an ice cream business in Ireland makes a lot of sense.

As a nation we love our summers, we're surrounded by seaside north, south, east and west, and if we're being honest who can really say no to a 99 on a good day? With a **margin of up to 85%** there's plenty of opportunity there too.

However, thinking about starting a business and actually starting one are two very different things.

At Dairyglen we have **30+ years experience** helping everyone from startups to national coffee chains when it comes to making the move into ice cream, milkshakes and other cold drinks.

In this beginners guide we'll take you step by step, answering the most important questions along the way...



WHERE TO START?

- How Much does a Machine Cost?
- What Type of Machine should you Buy?
- Alternatives and Additions
- Management and Maintenance
- Finishing Up and Getting Started
- Inside Dairyglen



HOW MUCH DOES A MACHINE COST?

Soft-serve ice-cream machines will vary drastically in price – and for good reason.

Not all machines are created equal so remember there is **no shortcut or bargain when buying a soft-serve machine.**

The cost of a soft-serve machine depends on multiple factors:

- The **size**
- The **type** (counter top, watercooled etc)
- How many **hoppers** it has
- Whether or not it is **self-cleaning**
- Whether it's **second-hand** or **new**.

Our soft-serve ice cream machines start at **€8995**.



CHOOSING THE RIGHT MACHINE FOR YOU

The most important thing to remember when buying a machine is; you will only get what you pay for. **You can put the exact same product in two different machines and get vastly different products out of each.** The type of machine and its features will have particular pros and cons that affect the consistency, taste and texture of the finished product it is designed to freeze and dispense.

If you have no knowledge of ice cream machines and don't know where or how to start looking, it's important that you speak to someone before you purchase.

We recommend setting up a call with our sales team who will give you the best advice and price for a machine that will suit your needs.



WHAT TYPE OF MACHINE SHOULD YOU BUY?

There are many types of ice cream machines; and depending on your business, there are some machines more suitable than others.

As with every piece of equipment you buy for a business, there are multiple considerations at play so let's take you through the various factors...



MACHINE FACTORS

If you're thinking about adding ice cream to your menu there are a number of elements to consider, primarily what volume you intend to sell and the placement of the machine.

The initial purchase cost will always be a factor, but it shouldn't be the only thing you consider when you make a final decision.

If you prioritize choosing the right machine, you could have it paid for within its first year.

Choosing the wrong machine could mean losing thousands in lost turnover. The right piece of equipment should complement your business and staff resource, and quickly slot in to facilitate further growth in sales.



MACHINE VOLUME

Potentially one of the most important factors is volume, otherwise known as machine capacity. Here, the most important question you need to ask is - How many portions do you need?

How often do you plan to use the machine? How many portions do you expect to sell per hour, per day, per week?

There are various influences here. The size of your store or food outlet, high street position and footfall, seasonality, and staff resource and rota can all impact your projected volumes both positively and negatively.

If you're unsure, let us help you. We can help you estimate the pace needed to serve your customers and recommend a machine best equipped to cope with this level of demand. Not all machines are equal in size or capacity but the Dairyglen team has 30+ years experience working with businesses of all shapes and sizes, and this means we can project what you'll need and then react accordingly moving forward.



MACHINE FEATURES

Choosing the right machine also means investigating the controls and cleaning features of the machine.

The machine spec (specifications) will always be an important consideration as certain models have more or less options and functionality available to them. How many tanks (hoppers) do you need? This is not just a question for volume, if you want to serve multiple flavours at once you will need to purchase a machine with more than one tank.

Consider your power requirements; do you have access to single or three phase power? Do you intend to serve just ice cream or would you like the opportunity to serve multiple products, like milkshake as well? Would you prefer a digital display screen over analog? The more up-to-date machine you buy, the easier any problems may be to trouble shoot.



MACHINE MAINTENANCE & CLEANING

Ice cream machines have necessary cleaning procedures that must be done daily including: wiping down all visible touch-points on the machine and keeping the machine topped up with mix.

But don't stop there! Do you want a machine that you clean every week or every month? With a heat-treated machine you are only required to clean it monthly. Non-heat treated machines will require weekly cleaning. ***Note!** You must always check the exact cleaning procedure required by the health authorities.

Maintenance is a different story, and we would highly recommend that all ice cream machines maintenance is carried out by relevant, experienced professionals. Ignoring this could result in damage, accidents and/or warranty or insurance voids.

For our clients, all machines supplied by Dairyglen are maintained and serviced by our team of qualified service engineers.



VISIBILITY & SPACE

You also need to consider the visible space available for you to place the machine.

Whether you decide to leave the machine back of house or place it visibly on your front counter, you will need to leave adequate space to easily access and operate it.

This generally results in a balance between required volume (output) and available space.

As experienced retailers and hospitality operators will know, creating a welcoming and aesthetically pleasing space for customers and guests is just as important as any output, so keep this in mind when choosing your next piece of equipment.



ALTERNATIVES & ADDITIONS

After you've considered what machine will best suit the needs of your business, you may need to have a look at additional equipment depending on your menu.

Do you need extra blenders? Topping dispensers? Cleaning equipment?

If you're planning to serve a wide range of toppings and inclusions, you will need to choose a suitable display and storage system.

Do you plan to serve more than one flavour? What about plant-based alternatives? Adding vegan options to your menu is a wise move in the current climate, with over 67% of consumers more inclined to purchase from you with the inclusion of plant-based alternatives on your menu.



Machine Management & Maintenance...

Machine Management & Maintenance

Cleaning your soft-serve ice-cream machine can be a long process. This is why **we offer full cleaning and maintenance packages** – so we take the hassle off you, and you can be rest assured your machine is cleaned correctly. Allowing our team to clean your machine will **reduce labour costs, eliminate heavy lifting and lessen water usage.**

GUIDELINES FOR HOW OFTEN TO CLEAN YOUR MACHINE

How often you clean your machine depends on two things:

- The type of machine you have
- The specific guidelines provided by your local public health department.

With a heat-treated machine you are only required to clean it monthly. Non-heat treated machines will require weekly cleaning. However, **you should always check the exact cleaning procedure required by the health authorities.**

When you purchase your machine from us, our technicians will provide an in-depth cleaning and maintenance course to take you through all the necessary steps.

TIPS FOR CLEANING YOUR COMMERCIAL, SOFT-SERVE ICE CREAM MACHINE:

1. First, empty and discard all the ice cream from the machine
2. Then, you will need to clean all the following parts:
 - The **tank** of the machine
 - The **hopper** and the tip of the **dispenser**
 - All dismantled **internal parts** (and wash the parts in a designated sink or bucket)
 - The **outside** of the machine.
3. Inspect and replace any damaged seals and O-rings. Reassemble the machine and lubricate the parts.
4. Sanitise
5. Refill the machine with a small amount of mix and discard the first run

MAINTAINING A SOFT SERVE ICE CREAM MACHINE

Regular maintenance of your machine is most important.

Once you've bought the right machine now you must take care of it. Your machine will last for years when it's properly maintained. With the exception of heat treatment systems, soft-serve machines need to be taken completely apart, cleaned and sanitized each week.

Certain parts can run through the dishwasher using food-safe sanitizers. Rinse the items prior to use. Use soap and water to wipe off the outside.

Finishing Up & Getting Started...

Finishing Up & Getting Started

Hopefully you now have a clearer understanding of the costs involved, what type of machines you can use and importantly how to manage and maintain them as your business and customer-base grows.

Before we finish, after working with hundreds of businesses across Ireland, our top tips for getting started and moving forward are:

SPEAK TO A PROFESSIONAL: Ice cream machines are expensive and complex pieces of equipment so it's important you understand what you're buying. It's imperative you speak to a professional – someone you trust who will go to the necessary lengths to understand your business first before recommending a machine.

DO YOUR RESEARCH: There are lots of great brands on the market so take your time and consider what features you really need from your machine.

ONLY BUY FROM A BUSINESS WITH A TEAM OF ENGINEERS COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING YOU: You wouldn't buy a car without knowing there was a garage nearby able to service, repair and effectively maintain your vehicle for you. Ice cream equipment is the same – the machine matters, but the aftercare and monthly maintenance is much more important. You will need access to qualified technicians, spare parts and repair services if you want your business to run smoothly.

Inside Dairyglen...

Dairyglen[®]

Inside Dairyglen

Dairyglen was founded on the belief that **you should do business with others the way you would like them to do business with you**. That's why we have a team of dedicated account managers and qualified service technicians committed to the success of your business.

Our diverse team, from qualified service engineers to industry experts across retail and hospitality, has over 35 years of industry experience. When it comes to ice-cream, we know what we're doing – and that's why some of Ireland's biggest retail brands trust Dairyglen.

We've helped every type of business from small food trucks, to restaurants, forecourts, coffee chains and full-blown catering businesses so you know you're in good hands.

To speak to someone from our team please contact any of our following sales consultants:

Shane Clancy
Head of Sales
sclancy@dairyglen.ie
+ 353 86 819 4674

Jade Hickey
Sales Consultant
jhickey@dairyglen.ie
+ 353 87 389 5512

Bobby Keenaghan
Sales Consultant
bkeenaghan@dairyglen.ie
+ 353 87 704 0388

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