

Frequently Asked Questions

Bulk Milk Dispensers

Dispenser Needs – Set Up

1. How do I find a dispenser supplier?

Most foodservice equipment distributors can source a bulk milk dispenser. A popular dispenser manufacturer is Silver King: <https://www.silverking.com/products/milk-dispensers/> Dispensers approximate cost is \$2,000-2,500.

2. How many dispensers are recommended?

One dispenser per serving line is optimal.

3. How many spigots are recommended per dispenser?

The dispenser should have, minimally, 2 spigots to offer multiple milk options - both white and chocolate. More spigots may be needed based on number of students served per line. This will vary from school to school. A 3-spigot dispenser is suggested for an elementary school with ~400 students. Is a lactose-free option needed?

4. What are the electrical requirements for a milk dispenser?

As an example, Silver King's dispensers state the following: Standard 115-volt, 60 Hz, single phase. Also available in 230 volt, 50Hz, single phase. Be sure to test the electrical system to ensure that breakers are not tripped in advance of starting program.

5. How much space does a dispenser need?

As an example, the Silver King dispensers are all 39-1/2" H X 17-1/8" D. The single unit is 15-1/2" W; the double is 26-1/2" W; the triple is 37-1/2" W. Other manufacturers may vary so please check the specifications.

6. Where is the best place to locate the milk dispenser?

Ideally, it is best to locate the dispenser before the cashier, so the meal can be identified as a reimbursable meal. The dispenser can be placed on a counter or on a cart/table. Be sure the cart is industrial with lockable wheels to prevent movement when in use.

7. What type of milk bags are recommended?

As an example, Silver King dispensers, each spigot can hold one 3 (48 servings), 5 (80 servings), or 6 (96 servings) gallon bag in a milk crate. Processors may have other sizes such as 4 gallons (48 servings).

8. How do I find a processor to provide the milk in bulk?

Work with your local processor and discuss your plans to serve milk in bulk with them before purchasing equipment to ensure the availability and sizes/flavors available.

9. How do I advertise the type of milk that is available in the dispenser and spigots?

The dispenser could be wrapped with customized graphics. Also, simple pictures of milk can be printed and laminated and secured on the dispenser. Magnets work well, too.

10. What type of cup is needed with the bulk milk dispenser?

Reusable 9 oz. cups are recommended. An estimate is one cup for each student participating at the meal period that serves the most (more than likely lunch). For a case of 36 the approximate cost is around \$30. This can vary across the country. One example, Cambro carries a NT9 tumbler, 9.3 oz. squat cup that costs ~\$.86 each.

https://cdn.brandfolder.io/PUODO3EZ/as/phj4hu-8292o0-4hh8ps/NT9401_A1C0_1018_S01.jpg

Disposable and/or compostable cups can also be used.

11. Do I have to have a dishwasher to change to a bulk milk dispenser?

No, reusable cups can be washed by hand, however, a dishwasher is recommended. If a dishwashing unit is determined to be needed, that space and cost should be considered.

12. Are dish machine trays needed and if so, how many?

Yes, dishwashing trays would be needed for the dish machine to clean and sanitize cups. They come in various sizes ranging from each tray holding 20, 25, or 36 cups. These can be sourced through any equipment distributor. Here is a link to one online source:

<https://www.webstaurantstore.com/39727/glass-racks-cup-racks-and-extendrs.html>

13. Is it better to use a washable cup than a carton?

Yes. Washable cups are better than disposable cartons. Most environmental impacts occur before we even see a product so if it is reused, it is better. Estimates vary, but if used 10 or more times, it is better than a disposable cup.

14. Where is the best place for cups on the serving line?

It is recommended that the cups be available before the milk dispenser. The trays with cups can be placed on a cart or on a serving line if space allows. Leaving them in the dish rack rather than handling them and placing them in another container saves labor.

Milk Handling

15. What is the optimal temperature for milk to be held?

Milk is best kept at 35 degrees or below.

16. Will additional cooler storage be needed?

A site visit to each school installing bulk milk dispensers is recommended to determine whether existing cooler storage for milk in bulk is adequate. Invite your dairy processor to join you to discuss stacking options, rotation, and expiration dates.

17. What are best practices for product mix, inventory control and partial bag handling?

Product mix will vary but it has been reported that when chocolate is offered, it is selected more often than white. Some students will mix the two. Inventory control This will vary based on HACCP and local guidelines. Any partial bags left must be kept at 35 degrees or lower.

18. Can the spigot(s) be secured after hours?

Yes, the spigot can be put inside the unit and locked until the next usage. Also, there is a clip that can be used to cut off flow when not in use.

Staff Training

19. What temperature should milk be held?

Milk should always be held at 35 degrees or lower. Thermometers should be checked daily to ensure proper temperatures are maintained. There are “Strive for 35” training materials available from your local dairy council.

20. Are Standard Operating Procedures needed?

Yes, these should be developed based on local policies regarding inventory control and ordering.

21. How difficult is it to clean and sanitize dispensers and cups?

Schools have reported that additional labor may be necessary to clean and sanitize the dispensing unit, wash reusable cups and switch out the bags. In other schools, it was reported that additional time to wash cups was minimal. Staffing can vary from school to school so this should be evaluated.

22. Is it better to proportion the milk from the dispenser or allow students to pour themselves?

With appropriate pre-work with students and teachers, students have shown they can successfully pour their own milk. Phasing in by grade levels at the elementary level has helped students gain experience and get excited about pouring their own milk when ready.

23. How are the USDA requirements met for a reimbursable meal?

By the time students have gone through the serving line they generally already have a reimbursable meal. One variable to consider is whether a district has chosen the “offer versus serve” option for how they qualify for reimbursements. Audits in districts using dispensers have indicated no issues.

24. What happens if we run out of the bulk milk and service is not over?

It is recommended to have a back-up of UHT milk or individual cartons until quantities can be forecasted. These can also be used for breakfast in the classroom, grab and go, and other feeding opportunities where the bulk dispenser is not able to be used.

Student Training

25. How do you build support from the teaching and administrative staff?

It is important to educate the staff on making the switch to bulk milk prior to implementation. Promoting waste reduction, a better school lunch experience for the students, and the ability for students to mix white and chocolate milk.

26. What is the best way to help students learn how to use the milk dispensers?

It is important to educate the students on making the switch to bulk milk prior to implementation. Allow students to visit the cafeteria and use the milk dispensers and try milk prior to starting use in the lunch/breakfast line. Bring each class and teacher to the cafeteria during non-service times and explain how the new milk dispensers work and how they get their cup, how much to pour to meet reimbursable requirements, and what to do if there is a spill. Put pictures on the milk dispensers to help them know each milk option.

27. How do you handle students that spill the milk?

Schools have reported minimal spills after beginning to use the milk dispensers. In fact, some schools reported fewer spills. Having a larger (more than 8 oz.) and wider (squat) cup helps the students to handle the trays better. Setting protocols for handling spills is helpful, too.

28. How is any leftover milk handled at trash/dish room window?

It is recommended that a bucket be placed next to trash/dish room window for any leftover milk. This is also an excellent way to quantify waste and determine any reduction. Schools have indicated that there is less liquid waste.

29. How do you keep kids from throwing cups in the trash?

Students pour their unfinished milk into a bucket, then place the cup upside down in the dishwashing tray. This process should be taught and reinforced as it will quickly become a habit for students.

Milk Sales

30. It is important to track milk taken, milk consumed, and milk wasted?

Yes, consider completing a pre and post waste study looking at milk consumption, milk waste and milk taken. In addition, tracking milk packaging waste by volume and by weight are recommended. A minimal of at least a full week pre and post study is recommended with a follow-up three to six months after implementation.

31. What else is important to track?

Average daily participation for breakfast and lunch along with cost of milk (up or down) is important to track. Also, waste hauling costs should be tracked to determine any reduction to offset any costs that may have increased. Some schools are tracking the number of trips custodians make to empty garbage. It is recommended to track for at least three to six months.

Waste Study

32. How is solid and liquid waste handled?

It is recommended to keep solid and liquid waste separately. This will also help with tracking volumes of milk not consumed.

33. What if there is a local recycling program for milk cartons and/or plastic chugs?

A recycling program is an advantage to a district if it does not cost anything additional to the school nutrition budget. This should be included in a feasibility study for milk dispenser implementation.