The Ultimate Guide to **Commercial Foodservice Equipment** for New Restaurants

When opening a new restaurant, there's a lot to think about. From permits and licenses to menus, staffing, suppliers, marketing and more — there's no shortage of items to put on your to-do list. And that's just the start of it. For new restaurants to be successful, they also need the right commercial foodservice equipment in place that will give them the results and efficiency they demand. But where do you start?

In this guide, we take a look at the great big world of commercial foodservice equipment and supply you with the information you need to establish a budget, identify your key equipment needs, and ultimately make the best purchasing decision for your operation. **Ready to dive in? Let's go!**

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Budgeting 101

In a recent Hatco Customer Insights Survey, participating Hatco sales representatives and dealers reported that the number one question they hear from equipment buyers is related to cost.[1] Not surprising, right? Commercial kitchen equipment is a significant investment that requires careful consideration. You wouldn't purchase a pair of shoes without first gaining an understanding of their price, so why would it be any different for a more substantial purchase like foodservice equipment? It wouldn't.

You need an equipment budget. But exactly *how much* budget is often where the debate comes in. WebstaurantStore, a popular online distributor of restaurant supplies and equipment, estimates that operators need to budget around $75,000 to $115,000 for equipment.[2] That's a good range to keep in mind, but your equipment budget is ultimately going to depend on factors that are unique to you. Do you have dining room seating or are you only offering to-go services? Do you have a certain look you're after, how much space do you have, what's your menu, and are you open to purchasing used equipment? These are the types of questions you'll need to ask yourself to narrow in on the scope of equipment you need to budget for.

Here's a helpful tip

Create a spreadsheet itemizing all of the equipment and tools you need. To do this, mentally or physically walk through the process of preparing everything on your menu (don't forget to pull your chef in on this one). As you go through your menu, update your spreadsheet to indicate which equipment types are needed for which menu items. This will give you a master list of your most immediate purchasing needs.

From here, you can research cost ranges for each item to get a gut check on how much your wish list will cost you. If it's too high, you can pull lower priority menu items or equipment off your list. Just remember to also keep in mind factors like seasonality and how much space you have. For example, the sous vide equipment you need to prepare your holiday duck might be able to wait until the fall. Or, perhaps you don't need three ovens and you can swap in a multi-purpose countertop cooking solution. Whatever the case, get an inventory of your most pressing equipment needs, so you can prioritize from there.

Sample spreadsheet

	COMMERCIAL EQUIPMENT NEEDED					
Menu Items	**Induction Cooktop**	**Salamander**	**Toaster**	**Griddle**	**Waffle Maker**	**Hot Food Well**
Steak n' eggs		✔	✔	✔		
Belgian waffles					✔	✔
Mini burritos	✔			✔		✔
Caramelized custard	✔	✔			✔	
Average price	$X,XXX	$XX,XXX	$X,XXX	$XX,XXX	$X,XXX	$X,XXX

Remember

You don't need an astronomical equipment budget. The key is to prioritize the **quality** equipment that will help you execute on your most critical menu items. Menus change, so also think about the **versatility** and **long-term application** for every equipment type on your list.

1. Hatco, Customer Insights Survey, March 2022.
2. WebstaurantStore, www.webstaurantstore.com/article/517/how-much-does-it-cost-to-open-a-restaurant.html, accessed Oct. 2022

Equipment essentials

Dishwashers, technologies, pots, pans, knives, slicers, shredders, and peelers — there's no shortage of equipment, tools and gadgets you'll need to purchase for your restaurant. That said, there are a number of "equipment essentials" that nearly every restaurant requires. Today we'll take a look at five of these essentials and supply you with the information, tips and considerations you need to help you make the most educated purchasing decisions possible.

Commercial equipment covered in this guide

We recommend checking out each of the five equipment types discussed in this guide. However, if you'd like to skip ahead to a particular equipment category, simply click the associated image or arrow below and you'll jump ahead to that section.

Ovens

Cooktops

Refrigerators and freezers

Holding equipment

Specialty equipment

Commercial ovens

Like that all-you-can-eat shrimp basket on your menu, commercial oven options are seemingly endless. Just when you think you've had your fill, another oven type is sure to surface in your research. Save yourself from the rabbit hole of information that awaits and narrow your search to one or two of the below oven types that fit your needs.

Conventional
Conventional ovens use an internal gas or electric element to heat the air inside the oven's cavity. This air is transferred to the food within the oven via infrared energy waves (aka radiant heat transfer). Conventional ovens do not use any mechanisms to circulate the hot air within the oven, so they tend to **cook food more slowly** and with **less consistency** than other types of ovens. Due to the somewhat uneven heat they provide, conventional ovens often require **more hands-on time** to rotate pans and monitor food. That said, conventional ovens have the **lowest price point** of your oven options and are typically **easy to operate and repair**.

Convection
Similar to conventional ovens, convection ovens also utilize a gas or electric heating mechanism. The difference is that convection ovens use fans to circulate hot air within the oven cavity. This results in **faster** cook times, a **more consistent and even heat**, and **less oversight** than needed with a conventional oven. Just be careful. Due to the circulating air, they are **more efficient** at heating, so staff may need to adjust recipe temperatures down and take special care with baking more delicate items that are **susceptible to overcooking**. Lastly, their fans **can be noisy**. If you go the convection route, be sure to look for a model with a quieter fan.

Impingement
Impingement ovens also use a gas or electric heating source, but they're equipped with a very unique nozzle component. This nozzle blasts hot air onto the food at a high velocity to cut through the cold air barrier that naturally envelops food as it enters the oven. The result is that food **cooks faster** and with **greater precision and consistency** than a lot of other ovens. While impingement ovens can ring the register at a higher price point than conventional and convection ovens, they're known to deliver exceptional results. Many models also offer attractive features such as **programmable menu presets**. Just be aware that some models can have a **larger footprint** than other oven types on the market. If you're tight on space, look for a **ventless, stackable** impingement option for greater install flexibility.

Rapid cook
Rapid cook ovens combine multiple cooking technologies to cook food at **accelerated speeds**, effectively reducing cook times by as much as 90%.[3] Different models use different technology combinations, but typically rapid cook ovens include some combo of conventional, convection, impingement, contact (or grill) and microwave methods. This mixing and matching of cooking technologies results in **exceptionally quick cook times** and **quality end results**. Rapid cook ovens tend to be pricier than more traditional options and their cavity sizes can be restrictive, but their speed, **compact footprint, programmability** and quality results make them a popular choice with many quick-serve restaurants and cafés.

Combination
Combination (or "combi") ovens offer a **three-in-one cooking solution** by allowing operators to cook with circulating hot air, steam or a combination of both. This **flexibility** means that staff can select the cooking mode that will produce the best results for a particular menu item. Combi ovens are also great for any operation looking to get multiple cooking capabilities into **one footprint** and reduce the volume of equipment taking up valuable space and budget.

When (vent)less is more.

A ventless oven does not require external venting or a hood, which means operators have more flexibility with where to install it. Tight on space? A ventless solution from Ovention Ovens might be for you. To learn more about all they have to offer, visit **oventionovens.com** today!

MiSA™-a12

3. Ovention, www.oventionovens.com/ovention-ovens/misa/, accessed Oct. 2022.

Commercial cooktops

Commercial cooktops are available as standalone units (cooktop only) or as part of a range (cooktop plus oven in one). You'll need to decide which setup is best for your operation. Additionally, you must determine whether an **electric, gas or induction cooktop** will best address your needs and priorities. For many, this is the biggest decision — one that requires careful evaluation across a few key categories.

Speed

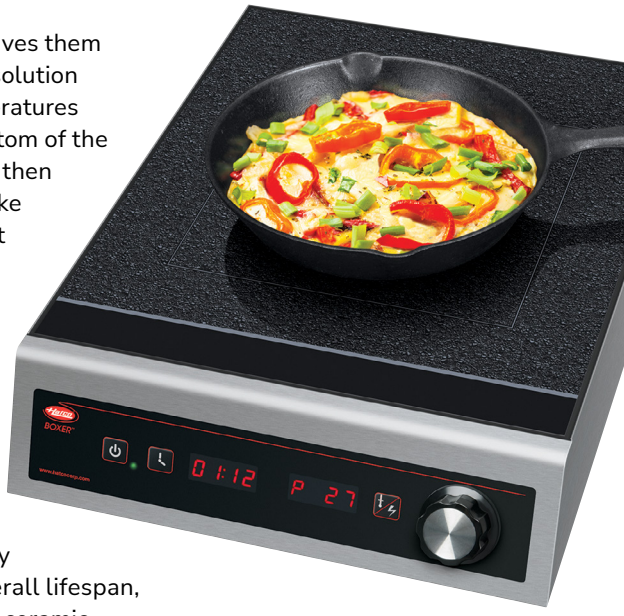
Gas and electric solutions deliver heat differently than an induction cooktop. With gas and electric, you have a heat source (a flame or electric heating element) that heats the cooktop (or burner), which then heats the pan, and consequently the food in it. Induction skips a step in this process. Rather than heating the cooktop, induction actually causes heat to generate directly in the pan. This is a more direct way of heating, which means your food will cook faster.

To illustrate just how much faster, consider a simple task like boiling water. A 3600-watt induction unit will boil six cups of water in just three short minutes. Compare that to six minutes on an electric cooktop and over eight minutes with a gas solution, and you have a clear winner in the speed department. So, if your kitchen is constantly up against the clock or you're simply looking to speed things up a bit, induction might be worth a second look. That said, you need to make sure your team can handle the speed that comes with an induction solution … which leads us to our next point.

Ease of use

Turn a gas- or electric-powered cooktop on, and the rest is pretty straightforward. Most people (professional or not) know what to expect when it comes to cooking with a gas or electric cooktop. On the flip side, it can take folks a little more time to acclimate to the speed of an induction cooktop. They may need to adjust the timing of other dish components and get a little practice under their belts with actually using an induction unit. In other words, there is a learning curve. But truth be told, it's pretty short lived. Induction is pretty intuitive and most people that make the switch from gas or electric to induction say "they'll never go back" (their words, not ours).

Precision, control and consistency
One of the big reasons induction is so "sticky" with professional chefs is that it gives them greater precision, control and consistency in their cooking than a gas or electric solution would. Because induction is a more direct way of heating, you can change temperatures with virtually zero lag time, all while maintaining a nice, even heat along the bottom of the pan. Want to maintain a controlled simmer with the gentlest of precise heat and then crank up the power to quickly sear a steak? Induction responds to adjustments like this with near immediacy. Some induction solutions even come with a convenient digital display so operators know exactly what temperature they're cooking at.



Model:
IRNG-BXC1-18

Durability
Think about the clanging of pans, swapping of inventory and shuffling of staff that happens in every single commercial kitchen. Not exactly the gentlest of places, right? Your equipment is going to take a beating, so you better make sure that the cooktop you select can hold up to the daily grind.

Luckily, most cooktops nowadays are pretty durable. There's not much to worry about with gas solutions; just make sure the burner knobs are high quality and won't crack overtime. Regarding electric, these units can have a shorter overall lifespan, but in terms of physical durability, they are usually fine as long as you go with a ceramic glass model (tempered glass can bow under high temperatures). And lastly, induction. Again, ceramic glass is the way to go here, but it's also important to note that certain induction units undergo stringent durability testing where they must withstand the impact of a 1.2-pound steel ball that's dropped from 21-inch heights and a 4-pound pan that's dropped 10 times from 8 inches above. They are s-t-r-o-n-g! But more importantly, how do we get this steel-ball-and-pan-dropping job?

Efficiency
Gas solutions deliver 35-65% of the energy they produce to the food they're cooking, electric delivers 35-65% and induction delivers 85-95%. This is a big difference. Because induction is a more direct way of cooking, less energy is lost to the atmosphere. The result is more efficient cook times and a less sweaty kitchen — which means happier staff and lower air conditioning costs for you.

Price
An electric cooktop will cost you the least in upfront costs, but to a large degree, "you get what you pay for" and will probably find yourself replacing it in the near future. Usually electric cooktops are inherited from an existing kitchen setup or purchased as a lower-cost solution for the occasional cooking need; they're rarely a first-choice pick for a commercial kitchen. On the flipside, gas and induction cooktops will cost you more in upfront costs, but are more reliable solutions. Just make sure not to be too shortsighted on price. Induction, for example, offers a lot of long-term savings compared to gas because it saves operators around 25% on fuel and approximately 10-20% in air conditioning costs.

Is induction right for you?

Induction gets a lot of hype these days, but that doesn't necessarily mean it's the best cooking solution for you. Check out our interactive decision map to evaluate your cooktop needs and whether or not an induction cooktop is right for you. **Check it out ▸**

Commercial refrigerators and freezers

Whether you're in the market for a large walk-in cooler and freezer, a modest reach-in or pass-thru solution, or an undercounter unit to stash your prepped foods, cold storage is a must-have for any foodservice operation. But not so fast; before setting your sights on a particular model, make sure that you're thinking through a few often-overlooked considerations.

Capacity

Obviously you'll want enough fridge and freezer space to store all of the foods and drinks you need to keep cold. The problem is, determining just how much capacity you need is easier said than done. One tip is to estimate the volume of product you think you'll sell in one week and multiply that by how often you'll order inventory. For example, if you plan to order inventory weekly, you'll need enough cold storage to house a week's worth of supplies, plus some incidentals and leftovers from the previous week.

You also need to consider the type of containers and menu items you're stashing. If you're accommodating large sheet pans of delicate fish or bulky boxes from an early morning food delivery, you need to ensure your fridge and freezer space is large enough so that you're not cramming products in so tight that airflow is restricted. Refrigerators and freezers work hard to keep products at the same temperature no matter where they're placed in the unit. If your fridge or freezer is packed to the gills or large items are sitting flush against the rear wall, the air in the unit has nowhere to go. As a result, some items might get too cold, while others might not get cold enough.

Tip

If you go with a reach-in refrigerator or freezer, install a wire grid on the back interior wall of the unit or use shelving racks with a rear lip to prevent staff from shoving containers all the way to the back wall of the unit and restricting necessary airflow.

Ambient temperatures

Think about where your cold storage units will live. If you plop a fridge in the kitchen near a row of cooking ranges, your fridge is going to have to work that much harder to keep your food cold. This impacts the unit's performance, but it's also the fastest way to wear out the unit's compressor. Scope out your space in advance and find the most strategic, temperature-controlled location to put your cold-storage units. Can't find an ideal location? Opt for a heavy-duty model that's tested and known to withstand suboptimal conditions.

Space and size

Regardless of what kind of unit you're buying, it needs to fit your space. To ensure you measure correctly, ask the equipment vendor about any extra space allowances you need to factor in. There are a lot of variables. For example, castors will add extra height requirements, certain units will need different access points for servicing, a unit with a top-mounted compressor will have different spacing requirements for ventilation than a bottom-mounted model, door sizes have different clearances, and on and on. Ask the questions upfront — and you're less likely to get yourself into a tight situation.

Other fridge and freezer features to consider:

- Welded corners for easy cleaning
- Temperature displays for food safety
- Recessed gaskets for a tighter seal and less wear
- Protruding vs. recessed handles for different applications
- Alarms that trigger if a door is left open
- Energy efficiency for utility savings
- Remote vs. self-contained condensers for different environments

Is a cold well right for you?

Buffets, prep stations, and to-go staging areas often require refrigerated holding solutions like cold wells that offer faster and easier access to products than refrigerators can provide.
To learn more about if a cold well is right for you, get your copy of **The Food Operator's Guide to Commercial Wells** today.

Get the guide ▸

Commercial hot holding equipment

Most commercial kitchens need holding equipment of some kind to ensure that their hot menu items remain at safe and ideal serving temperatures for customers. But this is another one of those equipment categories that gets overwhelming, fast. Narrowing your search to the most tried-and-true holding equipment types can help.

Model: DL-2400-SU

Heat lamps
Popular for kitchen work areas, waitstaff pickup stations and customer serving counters, heat lamps are decorative lights that keep food warm for brief periods of time. Just plan on one heat lamp per plate, as they have a very focused heat pattern that spans about 8 inches (203 mm) in diameter.

Learn more

Model: GRBW-48

Buffet warmers
Buffet warmers come in a lot of different shapes, sizes and materials. They consist of a bottom heat source or top and bottom heat in one. As the name implies, they're great for buffets. But, they also work well for any holding application where open, viewable access to food is needed.

Learn more

Model: HW-FUL

Heated wells
Some heated wells have cooking and rethermalizing capabilities, but the majority are designed to keep food hot while also ensuring products are easy for customers or staff to see and access. This makes heated wells a popular choice for buffets, staff prep stations and to-go staging areas.

Learn more

Model: FS3HAC-3626

Merchandisers and display cases
Merchandisers and display cases keep foods hot while allowing operators to showcase their product offering, drive impulse buys and put products at the fingertips of both customers and staff for a more streamlined experience.

Learn more

Model: GRAH-36

Strip heaters
Strip heaters provide overhead heat for brief holding times and are used in many of the same applications as heat lamps, as well as additional locations like buffets. The biggest differences are that strip heaters are less decorative and have a wider heat pattern that reaches a larger target area.

Learn more

Model: HDW-3B

Drawer warmers
Drawer warmers are vertically stacked holding solutions with insulated, thermostatically controlled drawers. They allow operators to prep a variety of foods in advance and hold them in individual drawers at different temperatures and humidity levels until an order is ready to plate or package for pickup.

Learn more

Model: F2G-34-A

Order pick-up stations
From floor-mounted and countertop locker systems to internet-connected pickup pods, heated shelves and cabinets, there are a variety of solutions designed to automate and streamline to-go services while keeping customer orders hot and tasty.

Learn more

Model: FSHC-6W2

Holding cabinets
Holding cabinets keep an array of food products at safe-serving temperatures for longer, allowing operations to prep foods well in advance of peak-serving periods. Available with and without glass or doors, humidity, wheels and more, there's a ton of options for operators to choose from.

Learn more

Commercial specialty equipment

Depending on your menu and restaurant type, you will likely need specialty equipment that allows you to perform a specific cooking task or support a particular need within your operation's walls. In some situations, these equipment types are a "nice-to-have," but in many cases they can make all the difference in efficiency, menu execution, safety and overall customer experience.

Examples of specialty equipment:
Click on image to learn more.

Carving stations
Model shown: DCSB400-R24-1

Chip warmers
Model shown: FST-1-MN

Crepe makers
Model shown: KCME-1RND

Dishwasher boosters
Model shown: S-54

French fry warmers
Model shown: GRFHS-PT26

Grills and griddles
Model shown: KGRDE-2513

Hot water dispensers
Model shown: AWD-12

Multi-purpose bakers
Model shown: SNACK-1

Panini presses
Model shown: MCG20G

Pizza holding cabinets
Model shown: PFST-2X

Pizza lockers
Model shown: F2GP-14-C

Pizza warmers
Model shown: GRSR-19

Plate warmers
Model shown: PWC-12

Proofers
Model shown: FSHC-12W1

Rethermalizers and bain-marie heaters
Model shown: FR-6

Rice warmers
Model shown: HRDW-2U-1

Salamanders
Model shown: SAL-1

Sanitizing sink heaters
Model shown: 3CS-9B

Sauce warmers
Model shown: KSW-1

Sneeze guards
Model shown: ALLIN1-72

Soup wells
Model shown: SW2-11QT

Toasters
Model shown: TQ3-500

Waffle makers
Model shown: KWM18-1BU

Purchasing perspectives

Once you determine your equipment needs, take a quick step back. It's easy to get lost in comparing the features and functionality of one product versus another and lose sight of the bigger picture. Before actually making a purchase, consider how the below factors could impact your overall satisfaction — and make adjustments accordingly.

Timeline

Delivery timelines can vary wildly depending on the particular product you're interested in, order volume, equipment vendor, and the current state of the supply chain. Before making a purchase, talk with the vendor about how long the equipment will take to arrive (they should be able to give you a ship date). If lead times are longer than you can stomach for a key piece of equipment or supply chain delays are a concern, ask if there are quick-ship alternatives. Hatco, for example, keeps over 300 of the most popular equipment models stocked, so they're ready to ship the same or next day. Depending on when your restaurant launches, this might be something to prioritize.

Value

Quality equipment that will stand the test of time may cost you a little bit more upfront, but can save you on replacement and repair costs down the road. Always factor in quality, but also think about the return on investment (ROI) certain product features and functionality will get you. Could the ability to program cook cycles for each of your menu items give you the consistent results you need to drive more revenue? Or could automation features, easy-clean designs and user friendly equipment save you on labor costs? Always think beyond the initial price tag and evaluate the long-term value your equipment investments could deliver.

Warranties

Foodservice equipment can be a substantial investment. If you make a purchase, you want to know it'll last. Purchasing quality equipment is step one, but even with the best equipment on the market, you want to know there's a safety net in the event something goes wrong. Look for equipment that's warranted for at least 12 months from the purchase date. Some companies only offer warranties on parts. Make sure both parts and labor are covered, as the repairs can often be the most expensive piece of the equation. Lastly, even if a company covers parts and labor in their warranty, make sure to check the fine print. Some companies cover parts and labor, but will charge you exorbitant fees for travel time, gas and mileage.

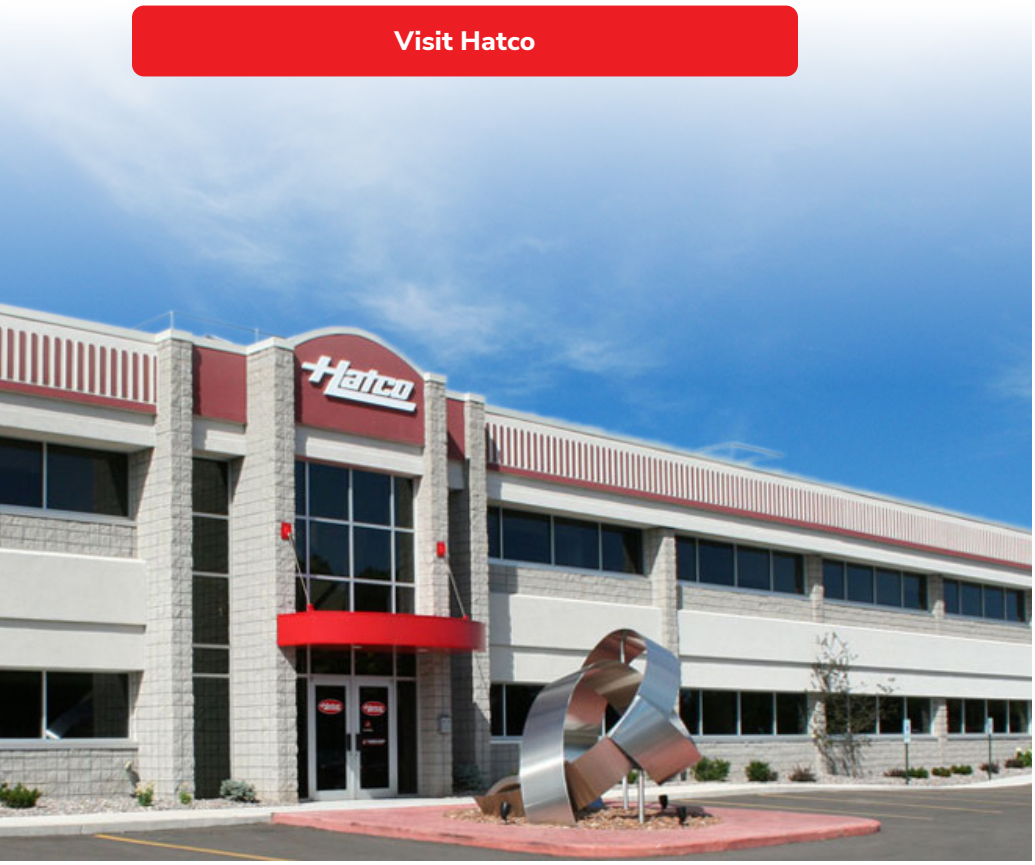
Company reputation

A top-notch company will stand by their products and have a proven track record with customers. As you evaluate manufacturers, narrow them down by prioritizing those with industry expertise across your target market and within the equipment category you're interested in. Ask for references, check reviews and look into the company's history. If the company has a long-standing reputation for quality and a competitive warranty policy in place, you're on the right track.

Put your trust in Hatco

Since 1950, Hatco has proudly partnered with restaurants to provide quality, reliable foodservice equipment and knock-your-socks-off customer service. Trusted as a premier commercial foodservice equipment manufacturer, Hatco stands by its commitment to excellence and goes above and beyond to provide customers with innovative, quality cooking, holding, serving and specialty foodservice equipment. To learn more about Hatco and to check out the latest product offerings, visit **hatcocorp.com** today.

Visit Hatco



Not sure which equipment is right for you?

Hatco has foodservice equipment experts all over the globe that are eager and willing to help you navigate your options. To learn more about how Hatco can help, find a local Hatco representative near you at **hatcocorp.com/find-a-rep** today!

Find a Rep

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