

# CASE STUDY

## MEETING FRANCHISEES WHERE THEY'RE AT

### *Global ice cream chain franchisee tackles cooking oil management with an eye to greater sanitation and savings*

A linchpin of quick service restaurants' value proposition is consistency and uniformity between locations. Counter to this value proposition is the reality that there can be subtle differences at a store level, particularly in back-of-house operations, depending on the franchise.

The owner of five Dairy Queen locations in Minneapolis, Minnesota, was looking for a safer method by which to dispose of used cooking oil (UCO) from fryers. The current practice, albeit antiquated, was entrenched. When oil life was determined to be expired, employees drained used cooking oil into dedicated buckets and then transferred the used oil to an outside dumpster, a practice that created a safety hazard that could lead to slips, falls, or burns. It also contributed to a messy kitchen that's difficult to clean and an eyesore in the parking lot, a blemish not reflective of the brand.

Safety has always been important for this chain and franchise. Regular training, preparation for oil changeout using signage and peer encouragement, and in-practice reminders and oversight were all part of the job. However, changing the fryer oil is widely considered one of the worst jobs in the kitchen, regardless of practice or protocol.

Now, in a tight labor market, a safe and clean environment can be a competitive advantage for attracting and retaining employees. It was time for a change.

#### **Time for a change**

Franchise ownership contacted Frontline International, manufacturer of superior equipment solutions for the collection, storage, and digital monitoring of fats, oils, and grease from commercial and institutional kitchens. Frontline is also the only global oil management equipment solution.

One value of Frontline International is the ability of its smart oil management solutions to meet franchisees where they are, offering the most complete line of fresh and used oil equipment – as well as automation, data management, and even full-service fresh oil deliveries and used oil recycling pickups, if needed.

#### **Starting with three locations**

DQ franchise owner, James Fowler, approached Frontline International about indoor used cooking oil containment tanks, eventually deciding to pilot Model 2478SQ-NA in three of his five locations. This space-saving, square-shaped model fits a footprint of just 24 in. x 24 in. and has a 150-gallon capacity.

For flexibility of use, Frontline is known for modularity. For that, there are several methods for depositing oil into the tank. The DirectPlumb® option pipes used oil directly from the fryer into the tank. For fryers without an integral pump, a Frontline pump station installed near the fryer can be used to pipe oil to the tank. Finally, a plumbing-free option is a wheeled, lockable caddy that enables oil to be drained from the fryer, secured, transported to the tank, and pumped in with a hose.

Fowler opted for DirectPlumb® and signed up for access to Frontline's M3 oil data management software. M3 provides robust historical reference points and comparable measurements to make it easy to understand when to change cooking oil — less guesswork, more predictable. As a high cost, ingredient, this knowledge was bankable.

The DirectPlumb® oil transfer methodology and M3 were specified for a melody of reasons. First, it can be hard to know when to change oil, leading to costly inefficiencies and inconsistent food, certainly from store-to-store, but also depending on the staff charged with dumping the oil. M3 measures real time filtration and oil change out intervals, allowing for mappable patterns and optimal consistency.

It also provided a by-the-drop weight measure of oil being collected. The used oil collected is a valuable commodity, and the rebates returned by the collectors to a restaurateur are more transparent with M3.

Another benefit of DirectPlumb® oil management, Fowler found the system made easy what used to be a complex process with many actions and steps in place to help ensure worker safety. Now, with the right tools, oil moves from fryer to tank with the touch of a button. Safety made simple.

"I was looking to improve operations, but needed a partner who could meet me where I was at. Frontline was a perfect fit."

James Fowler,  
DQ franchise owner





Finally, kitchen employees now find oil management less challenging. Frontline equipment eliminated a messy job with potential spills — a tiresome facility cleanliness concern at best, a safety concern at worst.

More empirically, Frontline waste oil collection equipment provides total cost management, roughly measured to help ensure waste reduction of 14-60% when frying oil is not discarded too early. In terms of quality and consistency, in previous pilots, Frontline has found 12-22% of oil was discarded too late, with fried product quality significantly impacted by frying oil quality — >50% for French fries and >33% for chicken nuggets.

### **Beyond waste oil**

The franchisee, impressed with the used oil solution, also wanted to discuss automated fresh oil options. Frontline's signature fresh oil system, EZ Oil™, holds 19 JIBs (jug-in-box) of oil, maintaining a 675 lb/90 gal (306 kg/340 l) capacity.

EZ Oil was the only game in town in terms of automation in fresh oil dispensing. Dairy Queen has a top-down mandate that only its signature and high-quality cooking oil be used across all stores. Bought by the box, the oil is manually poured into fryer vats, both on an as-needed basis to maintain optimal cooking oil levels in the vat, a process called topping-off, which replaces oil absorbed into fried foods, and when oil is completely dumped.

“The manual pouring was just another step in the oil management process and was unprecise,” said Fowler.

With patented EZ Oil, oil bought by the box is placed onto the equipment and oil is automatically drawn into its vast reservoir. Plumbed directly to the fryer, EZ Oil affords the capacity of a bulk oil tank, but with greater freshness. JIBs also often cost less when factoring in delivery charges versus bulk oil.

EZ Oil also works seamlessly with the on-board automation available with the two fryer types specified for this QSR chain (Frymaster and Henny Penny). EZ Oil can be set to automatically top off fryers between orders or at pre-set levels.

### **Beyond the equipment**

The services surrounding cooking oil are also a necessary aspect of operating a foodservice kitchen. OilCare® is Frontline's sister company that builds a suite of cooking oil related services around Frontline's smart oil management equipment, including fresh oil delivery and used cooking oil collections.

Frontline International's model is for operators who want to own their equipment and procure other services on their own. For operators who want to pay as they go for equipment and gain turnkey support services, OilCare® is for them.

Fowler preferred to purchase equipment outright and manage his own oil-related services. However, the ability to choose between equipment options and service solutions, leaving some on the table and drawing others as needed, was precisely the modular and flexible approach for which he was looking.

“I was looking to improve operations, but needed a partner who could meet me where I was at. Frontline was a perfect fit,” said Fowler.

### **The result**

This QSR's corporate overseers monitored results of the Minneapolis three-location experiment and were pleased with the results. A cleaner, safer kitchen is expected to be an aspect of employee retention in this competitive labor market. The secure used cooking oil helps contribute to the bottom line in the form of rebates from oil recycling.

Frontline was invited to present to leadership at the chain's exclusive trade show. Frontline's fresh and used oil equipment is being added to the chain's official store where franchisees order sanctioned equipment for their locations.

### **About Frontline International**

Frontline International, Inc. designs, manufactures, and distributes superior commercial foodservice equipment for the storage, handling, and disposal of cooking oil. With Frontline, you own your own equipment, negotiate your own oil rebates, and have the freedom to choose your own oil vendors. Frontline and its Smart Oil Management systems offer users more freedom and more control over their processes and their profits. For more information, contact Frontline International, Inc. at 187 Ascot Parkway, Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44223. Phone: +1 330-861-1100. Toll free: 1-877-776-1100. Web: <http://www.frontlineii.com>. Email: [info@frontlineii.com](mailto:info@frontlineii.com).