



10 simple steps to trouble free Ware Washing



A commercial dishwasher is often the unsung hero in your kitchen. They work tirelessly in some corner or back room where their efforts go unnoticed. That is of course until they're not working. Without a properly functioning dishwasher the kitchen flow falters very quickly with the only solution meaning somebody has to get his or her hands dirty.

Physically washing up becomes a very time and labour consuming process and expensive. Not only that but wash results and hygiene has to be considered all of which can add up to a very unpleasant experience until your workhorse is back in action. Of course it doesn't have to be like that.

By taking simple steps you can have a very productive, efficient dishwasher that gives you years of trouble free operation.

In this Eco Catering quick guide we'll assume you've purchased the correct machine for your operation so it can cope with the workload and it has been setup accordingly.



1. Detergent and Rinse Aid Chemicals

Make sure you use a quality detergent and rinse aid. Dishwashers use a different detergent to glass washers so make sure the appropriate chemical is used. Keep these levels topped up and don't let them run dry. Using inferior or even no chemicals in some cases will give poor wash results. Domestic dishwasher tablets and chemicals should not be used, commercial machines are not designed to work with these.

2. Water Softeners

For sites in hard water areas, your dish or glass washer should have either an internal or external softener. Make sure the softener is kept topped up with salt.

When adding salt to an internal softener make sure you wipe away any salt spills in the dishwasher chamber, the salt reacts with stainless steel causing it to corrode.

For external auto softeners top up with salt when the level runs low. For external manual softeners follow the full procedure for the regeneration process. You cannot simply top it up with new salt. Refer to the user manual supplied with the softener.

The volume of salt and the frequency of regenerations will vary from site to site. Every customer's requirements will differ due to the hardness of the water and machine usage and if using an external softener the capacity of the unit itself. Units with in-built softeners will usually have a warning light on the control panel informing you when the salt level is low. External automatic softeners will need to be physically checked by looking in the chamber. External manual softeners are harder to check and ideally you need to implement regular intervals between regenerations and refills. We would recommend timetabling it in the cleaning schedule.

3. Pre-Scrape, Wash and Don't Overload

Pre-scrape and pre-rinse or wash items before putting them in the ware washer. All but the very top end commercial ware washers should be used as a finishing tool. Putting in heavily soiled items will dirty the wash water very quickly but more importantly block the filters and strainers. This will impact the performance of the dishwasher and could even lead to damage being caused due to the additional strain on the components.

When loading your trays, it's tempting to get in as much as possible, this is often counterproductive. Manufacturers research and develop the wash cycle and spray patterns within machines to give the most effective and efficient wash results. If a tray is overloaded the wash coverage will not be effective meaning poor results.

4. Filters and Plugs

Make sure all appropriate filters and plugs are in place within the machine before usage. Models vary but not all have sensors to warn you if the filters aren't in place. Visibly check they are correctly fitted. Filters are there to prevent food and other debris from blocking or damaging the ware washer. Broken glass or something of that nature getting into the wrong components can cause serious damage to your machine.



5. Full Machine Operation

Allow the unit to perform its cycles fully. Technology is always advancing within the ware washing industry and machines are becoming fully automated, the processes they go through are in place for the benefit of the machine and operator and as such should be allowed to complete. Here are some examples of why your dishwasher or glass washer may pause or slow down, the reasons for them doing this and more importantly why they should be allowed to finish:

A number of units have a Thermostop control system which means they only wash at the correct temperatures. This ensures optimum performance from the unit but also activates the cleaning chemicals so they work effectively, the hot water also helps kill bacteria. Machines lose temperature during operation, when it's fallen too far the unit will pause whilst re-heating the water before commencing the wash. This can lead to a slight delay between some wash cycles but the purpose of this is key to your units operation.

Units with inbuilt softeners will go through a regeneration cycle. This may well take place during service dependent on usage. It will delay the unit for several minutes however it is imperative the ware washers finish this process otherwise the water will not be softened and lime scale will build in the unit.

Dependent on the specification the unit may go through a series of cycles to complete a full wash. E.g. Pre-rinse cycle, Wash cycle and Rinse Cycle. Interrupting this process could mean your wash results are poor or even that hygiene standards are not being met.

6. Daily Clean

Drain down and clean the dishwasher after service. Getting rid of the dirty wash water is crucial not only for hygiene reasons but for effective wash results.

General process to follow:

- > Drain down
- > Open door/hood
- > Remove filters and strainers, making sure food/debris does not enter the pump intake.
- > Flush strainers etc. with running water
- > Clean machine chamber down and remove any food/debris
- > Check and clean door seal
- > Replace filters and strainers
- > Leave door/hood open for ventilation

7. Weekly Clean

It's recommended you undertake a more thorough clean once a week. Follow the steps above but also remove and unblock/clean the wash and rinse arms. Follow the manufacturer's manual for any model specific instructions.



8. Automatic Cleaning Function

Some machines have automatic hygiene cleaning functions. Systems monitor the usage and condition of the ware washer and will then request a hygiene clean, usually using specific manufacturers cleaning/hygiene tablets or chemicals. It is recommended you follow the procedure. These processes are designed to deep clean areas and components not accessed through a standard operators clean down. This will allow the dishwasher to perform at its optimum, sustain its efficiency and help prolong the life of the ware washer.

9. Servicing

Like any piece of commercial machinery regular servicing and maintenance checks should be scheduled throughout the life of the glass washers and dishwashers. The frequency should be determined by the usage of the equipment. There is no hard or fast rule but once a year for average usage and potentially every 6 months for very busy sites is a reasonable guide. This is however a guide and every owner should take a view on a site by site basis or refer to the manufacturers recommendations. An engineer can help keep the machine performing at its optimum, they will be able to make any setting alterations if required and advise of any signs of neglect or potential issues that could arise.

10. Staff Education

The final but probably most important aspect of maintaining any ware washer. Kitchen staff can change with regularity either moving up the ranks or moving on. The problem with this is the new member of staff that takes over is often given little or no training on the equipment. Like any tool, staff members should be given training in the operation of the dishwasher. A large number of call outs are due to user error. For machines under warranty this would not be covered and would be chargeable. Obviously a machine out of warranty would result in a costly call out.

If damage has been caused and parts are required then there will be a cost for the parts plus additional time on site for the engineer and potential down time if the part is not readily available.

All of this can be avoided if staff members are trained. Remember a number of leading manufacturers offer ongoing product support in the way of free on site staff training.

In summary, your commercial dishwasher or glass washer is often neglected and overlooked, however it is a crucial piece of equipment that helps keep your operation running smoothly. By following these simple steps there is no reason you can't have a trouble free ware washer that gives years of solid performance, leaving you to concentrate on what's important, running the business.

Please note: This is a guide only with some key points and recommendations to help keep your ware washer running smoothly and trouble free. The majority of manufacturers will supply an instruction manual which should include details on operating and looking after your equipment and they may even suggest service intervals. We would always recommend you follow the manufacturer's instructions and guidance.

Larger dishwashers such as rack and flight dishwashers are very different machines with a number of varying configurations and specifications. On site staff training should be supplied with these units on general operating and cleaning procedures and maintenance terms should be discussed on a dishwasher by dishwasher basis.