

CATERING EQUIPMENT WARRANTY EXPLAINED

A Practical Guide for UK Commercial Kitchens

Buying catering equipment should feel straightforward. But words like “parts-only”, “return-to-base” and “manufacturer warranty” can mean very different things in practice. This guide explains what those terms really mean, what protection you actually get, and what to check before committing.

Everything here is based on real conversations with UK cafés, restaurants and commercial kitchens.

QUICK CLARITY CHECK

- ✓ A **warranty** and a **returns policy** are not the same thing
- ✓ **Parts-only** does not include labour
- ✓ Used equipment usually **does not** come with a manufacturer warranty
- ✓ Installation by a **qualified catering engineer** is often required
- ✓ Warranty repairs are **not instant** and do not reset the warranty period

These are the points that cause most confusion in commercial kitchens.

1. WARRANTY VS RETURNS POLICY

Warranty

Ongoing cover provided by the manufacturer on new equipment for faults that develop during a set period (typically 12–36 months).

Returns Policy

Short-term protection if equipment is faulty when delivered or collected. This is common on used or ex-demonstration equipment.

They manage risk in different ways. Always check which one applies.

2. PARTS-ONLY VS PARTS & LABOUR

This is where expectations and reality often differ.

2.1 Parts-Only Warranty

A parts-only warranty covers the component itself, not the repair process.

- Manufacturer supplies replacement parts
- You arrange and pay for your own engineer
- Labour, call-out and travel costs are not included
- Often return-to-base

Example:

If your fridge stops cooling and the fan motor fails, the manufacturer may supply the motor. You would still need to pay an engineer to diagnose and fit it.

2.2 Parts & Labour Warranty

A parts & labour warranty covers both the part and the repair carried out by an authorised engineer.

- Manufacturer supplies replacement parts
- Authorised engineer arranged
- Labour included
- Warranty continues from original purchase date
- It does not reset or extend
- No temporary replacement unit provided
- Repairs usually require two visits (diagnose and return to fit)

Example:

If your fridge stops cooling and the fan motor fails, you open a claim and an engineer attends to fix it without additional labour costs.

Bear in mind that warranty repairs depend on engineer availability and manufacturer procedures.

3. NEW, USED & EX-DEMONSTRATION EQUIPMENT

New Equipment

Usually comes with a manufacturer warranty. Terms are set by the manufacturer, not the supplier. Installation by a qualified catering engineer is normally required, and proof may be requested.

Used Equipment

Across the UK industry, used catering equipment rarely comes with a manufacturer warranty. Instead, it is typically sold with a short returns period for faults.

At NCE:

Used equipment: 14-day returns policy for faults

Ex-demonstration equipment: 30-day returns policy for faults

Because the returns window is limited, equipment should be installed and tested as soon as possible after delivery.

4. CONDITIONS THAT CAN AFFECT A WARRANTY

Manufacturer warranties usually come with conditions.

- Installation must be carried out by a qualified catering engineer
- Correct electrical supply must be used
- Routine maintenance must be followed
- Terms and conditions must be adhered to
- If these requirements are not met, a claim may be refused.

5. BEFORE YOU BUY, CHECK:

- ✓ Is the equipment new, used or ex-demonstration?
- ✓ Who provides the warranty?
- ✓ Is it parts-only or parts & labour?
- ✓ Is it return-to-base?
- ✓ Who pays for engineer labour?
- ✓ What installation proof is required?
- ✓ What is the returns window?

These checks take minutes but can save significant time, cost and disruption later.

ONE LAST THING

Understanding the warranty before you buy is always easier than trying to understand it when something goes wrong.

If anything isn't clear on a listing, ask. It's better to have it explained properly than assume it's covered.

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Nationwide Catering Equipment

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