

Study: Selling to Offsite Central Kitchens 2026 Update

A central kitchen – also known as a commissary kitchen – is an internal facility that supplies restaurant branches under a single business with ingredients or items that will be used or sold at each location.

In our 2026 update, our focus will also be on owners of central kitchens who also rent out their space to emerging businesses, food trucks, mobile food carts, and smaller restaurants that don't have space to store and prep large quantities of food.

Foodservice IP will update its landmark 2017, 2020, 2022 and 2024 studies to reflect the rapid changes that have occurred in this channel with the explosion of delivery since that period.

Engagement Objectives

- Help manufacturers identify, target and sell to offsite central kitchens serving select restaurant segments, retail foodservice and onsite foodservice.
- Provide sponsors with an avenue of sales growth outside of the traditional supply-chain channels
- Identify local, regional and national third-party kitchens
- Profile the top offsite, independent central kitchens for sponsor identification

Key Issues (Proposed)

- What goes into the decision to pursue an in-house or third party central kitchen solution?
- What drives the decision for which products to produce?
- What are the benefits and drawbacks of using central kitchens?
- What percentage of foodservice purchases comes through central kitchens? How will this change going forward?
- Which are the leading central kitchens? National vs. regional players?
- How are products received? How are they distributed? What is their organizational structure?
- How do central kitchens select suppliers? Who makes the decision?
- Who are some best-in-class suppliers to central kitchens? What makes them best-in-class?
- What other segments (e.g., vending, healthcare) do central kitchens service?
- How important are central kitchens to distributors?
- How are retailers currently utilizing and merchandising prepared food and grab-and-go products?
- What is the margin structure by key product groups?
- What are the key selection criteria for products in this venue?

Scope

The segment scope of this study includes drug stores, convenience stores, supermarkets and “other” retailers, including club stores and general merchandise stores, such as Target and Walmart, plus some QSRs and select noncommercial operators.

Product Scope (Not Exhaustive)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dispensed hot and cold beverages • Bottled/package beverages • Sandwiches (wraps, burgers, deli) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pizza • Sides/bites • Prepared salads • Fresh-cut fruit • Soups • Yogurt parfait 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baked goods • Desserts • Disposable/takeout packaging • Foodservice equipment
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Study Approach

Activity	Description
1. Engagement initiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foodservice IP will meet privately with each sponsor to discuss objectives of the program. • Confidential requests can be accommodated without compromising the overall engagement. • Meetings with stakeholders that will be using this research (by conference call) is recommended at this stage, but not required.
2. Existing Data Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foodservice IP will review public information and nonproprietary research to identify trends.
3. Interviews with Retailers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foodservice IP will conduct 100 interviews with major c-store, supermarket and general retail chains and select noncommercial and QSR operators. • An additional 10-15 interviews will be conducted with foodservice executives at corporate headquarters. • Sponsors will have the opportunity to review the survey and propose additions and modifications prior to launch.
4. Offsite, Central Kitchen Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foodservice IP will conduct interviews with 20-25 offsite central kitchens identified in step three. Interviews will be with owners, senior management, sales and other relevant functional areas.
5. Strategic Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foodservice IP will prepare a written report to document study results and conclusions. • This report will provide each sponsor recommendations to leverage the retail foodservice opportunity. • Foodservice IP will deliver baseline industry and consumer data and projections regarding likely future developments in the segment. • The engagement team will be available for private meetings to discuss business issues and strategies.

Timing and Fees

- Estimated project duration: 10 weeks from initiation.
- Target launch: Late 4Q 2025, delivery late 1Q 2026
- Pre-launch sponsors will join a steering committee to help shape study objectives.
- \$15,000 per study (per sponsor), exclusive of travel for private presentations.
- Discounted multi-study participation: two studies for \$26,500 or three studies for \$35,000, when confirmed in advance or together with the first sponsorship.
- **Foodservice IP can invoice the first half in Jan. 2026.

Billing policy:

- 50% upon initiation
- Balance due at delivery of final report