



TurnKeyParlor's

CART VENDING BUSINESS GUIDE

- *Italian Water Ice*
- *Ice Cream*
- *Gelato*
- *Pre-Packaged Novelties*

A Complete Business Planning Kit

First sets start with the legal stuff the lawyers make us say.

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Cart Vending Business Guide

A comprehensive, simple to follow guide to success in the frozen dessert vending business

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Chapter 1

What type of cart is right for you?

There are a few different types of push carts to consider. Choosing the right one depends on what type of product you plan to sell. Other factors include your selling location and whether or not you will have access to electrical power on a regular basis.

Pricing on carts varies greatly and is dependant on what you will sell. Once you've identified what your needs are you will be looking at one or a combination of the following:

1. **No refrigeration, dry ice** push cart with heavy insulation. This is the least expensive option at about \$1200. Typically used to dip Italian ice, for a limited amount of time (depends on heat index and how busy you are.....opening and closing the lid).
2. **Refrigeration** cart that needs to remain plugged in to keep temperature. Can go below zero degrees F or can be used for chilling items like yogurt (special dual-temp thermostat must be installed). About \$1900 to \$2500
3. **Cold Plate Push Cart** – Plugs in at night to charge cold plates and is good to sell for up to 12 hours without access to power. Most commonly used for pre-packaged ice cream or novelties, but can also be used for dipping Italian ice. Dipping ice cream out of this cart without a sink can be a challenge as most health departments will require a sink (see dipping cart next) About \$2700 - \$3100.
4. **Dipping Cart** – Optional sneeze guards, sinks, dip wells and dry storage areas. Most expensive option but also most versatile. Anywhere from \$4k to \$12k or more depending on level of customization.

No-refrigeration dry ice cart

This is the least expensive way to go. The obvious benefits are cost and the fact that they are lighter weight, making them easier to transport. These carts are primarily for those who are going to use the cart for relatively short periods of time when they go out to sell.

Many Italian water ice vendors will use this no refrigeration option, without dry ice. Again, the low cost helps get them in business for a lower cost, so they go with this option. Because Italian Ice is water based, it holds up pretty well for around 3-4 hours of scooping. Actual selling time will vary according to how busy you are and how hot it is outside.

Dry ice works well in this cart if you are going to be selling a pre-packaged product (ice cream cups, bars, fruit bars, etc.) Dry ice for selling Italian ice is a little more of a challenge as it can make the product too hard and not optimal for scooping. So if you are going to use dry ice with when serving Italian ice, you need to go through a process of trial and error. Essentially, you need to make sure that you protect the Italian ice from getting too close to the dry ice. Just make sure you have a good amount of cardboard, or something protecting the Italian Ice. Try putting 10 lbs. of dry ice in the cart, give it a few hours and see how your product reacts to it. If it's "unscoopable", then you know you have too much dry ice in there....so make the adjustment. Eventually, you will learn how much dry ice is needed for a typical selling day. If you are having problems finding dry ice, try Penguin Dry Ice (www.penguindryice.com). They have retailers all over the country and you can put your zip code in their "search box" to find the nearest one to you.

Dry ice can get expensive if you are selling on a regular basis, so we do not recommend you go with this option if you are planning to use the cart daily to sell novelties, etc. If you will be using your cart more than a few times a month for novelties, you should go with a refrigeration or cold plate cart.

Watch a video on this cart by visiting TurnKeyParlor.com

Refrigeration (plug-in) carts

These carts are ideal if you will have access to electrical power throughout your selling day. Essentially, they are the same cart as the no-refrigeration cart, except that they have a refrigeration unit and will keep temperature while plugged in. Again, if you find yourself in a situation where you don't have access to power, these carts are also very well insulated and you can get away with using them as a no-refrigeration cart with or without dry ice – depending on your product and projected selling time.

These CLT refrigerated carts are ideal for those who will take the cart to the same location regularly or to different events and sell from one spot and have access to power

all day. Simply set the digital thermostat at the desired temperature (-10 for novelties, for example) and you're ready to go.

Cold Plate Carts

Cold Plate carts are our best sellers because of their versatility. Cold plates are built inside the cart and are filled with a solution that, when plugged in over night, will keep the cart temperature at below zero for up to 12 hours. Different solutions are used for different optimal temperatures. For example, ice cream novelties should be kept around -10 to -20 degrees F. But Italian Ice needs around +10 to +20. This wide range of temperature needs means you have to use a different solution in the cold plates to achieve the optimal temperature. Just make sure that we know what type of product you will be selling and what your optimal temperature will be so that we can build the cart with the appropriate cold plate solution and thermostat.

The cold plate carts are heavier, making them a little more difficult to transport. But aside from that factor, cold plate is the best way to go to ensure that you will be able to sell for a full day, regardless of whether you have access to electrical power or not.

Watch a video on these carts by visiting TurnKeyParlor.com

Dipping Carts

Dipping Carts come in many forms, from the most basic cart with a dip well to the most complex cart and canopy with a fully self contained stainless steel 3 compartment sink and stainless steel tank.

Overhead canopies are great not only from a branding perspective, helping visibility, but also from a practical standpoint. The canopies provide a pull out shade barrier and have a dry storage shelf up above that will hold cups, etc.

The first step when deciding what type of dipping cart you want is to check with your local health department and see what they require. They will need to know what type of product you plan to dip and whether you will be serving it inside or outdoors. It is much more difficult to get approval for selling ice cream and gelato outdoors due to the dairy content. Italian ice can also be a challenge to dip outdoors, but the health codes are much more lax because it is a water based product.

Dipping Carts can be customized depending on your needs and the health department requirements. Custom racking systems can be built to fit the dimensions of your dipping containers, whether 3 gallon tubs, gelato pans or other containers.

Dipping carts can be fitted with cold plates, in order to have the option of operating the cart without access to power. That said, running the sink requires power, so most of these larger dipping carts are only used in situations where there is consistent access to electrical power.

Dipping carts with sinks and dip wells are not generally a good option if you intend on moving the cart from event to event on a regular basis. It can be done, and these carts are built tough, but at the end of the day, they are can be too bulky to make daily or regular transport a good idea.

Some malls have certain color schematics and requirements. We can customize the cart to meet them.

Transporting your Cart

There are many ways to transport your cart. These include in the back of a pick-up truck, inside a van or with a trailer of your choice. Many people choose a trailer because they are lower to the ground and can make it much easier for one person to get a cart onto it.

Lowe's and Home Depot have the perfect trailers. They are primarily used by landscapers who carry lawn mowers and tools. But these are perfect for one cart or even two, and they can be had pretty cheap relative to other forms of transporting your cart. A 4' x 6' lawn trailer (as they are sometimes referred to as) can go for under \$500. You can see these in the parking lot next to the Lawn & Garden area.

Chapter 2:

Planning

How Much Do I Need to Get Going?

Answer: tough to do with less than \$2500 and the range is pretty wide. Possibly less if you go with used equipment.

Compared to a multitude of other businesses, starting an ice cream vending business can be relatively inexpensive.

How much can only be answered after you decide what product you are going to sell and where you are going to sell it and how many days a year you plan to work the cart. That said, I've outlined some start up costs for a business that will sell pre-packaged ice cream novelties (cups, ice cream bars, fruit bars, etc.). You should be able to get a general idea of what your start up costs will be based on these.

Start up Costs Work Sheet For Push Cart Selling Novelties:

1. BDC-8 Cold Plate Cart (includes shipping & Umbrella)	\$3125
2. Lawn Trailer from Lowe's or Home Depot for transport	\$495
3. Back Up Chest Freezer for product storage	\$325
4. Misc. Equipment (hand truck, garbage can, cash box)	\$100
5. Starting Inventory	\$350
6. Space Fee (first event – one day)	\$50
7. Insurance permits, etc.	\$300

TOTAL START UP COSTS FOR BDC-8 PUSH CART BIZ **\$4745**

If you go with a **CLT Model Push Cart** (the type that needs to remain plugged in to an electrical source – ie: no cold plates), your cart cost would be about **\$2300 (depending on size) so your total start up costs would be closer to \$3920.**

If you go with an average dipping cart (the type you might put in a mall, amusement park or a stadium) you are probably looking at \$10 to \$15k in start up costs.

What is the absolute lowest cost way to get into the ice cream or Italian ice business? Probably going with a CLT model cart with no refrigeration (uses dry ice – or nothing at all).

If you go with the smallest, CLT4 no refrigeration cart, you can fit 4 to 8 tubs (depending on configuration and size of tub) of Italian water ice and probably get away with scooping it for anywhere from 3-6 hours depending on the heat index and how busy you get (opening and closing the lid). **This cart goes for just under \$1400 including shipping, so you can probably get started for about \$2,500.** The CLT no refrigeration cart is a well insulated cart with all the great features of other Nelson carts. Stainless steel bottom, stainless steel flip lids, great rubber tires, etc. These carts are also built with the understanding that they are going to take a beating.

You can also go with the no refrigeration cart, and use dry ice to sell pre-packaged ice cream novelties like ice cream cups, bars, fruit bards, etc. This option is only recommended if you aren't going to be selling on a daily basis because if that's the case, the dry ice will start to get expensive and will quickly deplete the savings you gained by going with this less expensive cart. But dry ice is not really that hard to find and you can buy it in small quantities. Major grocery chains, like Kroger, sell dry ice – and you can buy a days worth for about \$5.

Chapter 3

HOW MUCH CAN I MAKE?

Of course, this is always the million dollar question. I can't really tell you how much you will make because that depends on a multitude of factors. These factors include:

- how many days a year you want to work
- How often you will use employees instead of running the operation yourself
- How soon will you expand to multiple carts and hire help
- What type of product you will sell
- Where you will sell your products

All of the above said, I will try and give you a few examples for you to get general idea of what you can expect to make if you work a the cart yourself and plan to do so for 6 months out of the year.

If you are going to sell pre-packaged novelties (ice cream bars, fruit bars, cups, etc.) you are going to pay a supplier anywhere from \$.35 to \$1.75 per unit. In some cases, you'll pay over \$1.75 for an item, but that would be the exception. In other cases, you might pay below \$.35 for an item, but that again, is the exception. Cost depends on size, quality, etc. Haagen-Dazs and Dove Bars are great sellers, and these will be closer to the \$1.75 per unit cost. Fruit Bars like FrozFruit, Fruti, Edy's Fruit, etc. will run you about \$.75 per unit.

Your retail (what you sell your product to the customer for) will vary greatly depending on where you are selling and what it is costing you to sell from that location or at that event. You really have to get to know your typical customer and then adjust your product mix and pricing according to that typical customer. Ideally, you want to make close to 3 times what you pay for the item, except when you are selling the high end stuff that's costing you around \$1.75 per item. These you can sell for 2 times cost. The reason is that the actual profit on an item that costs you \$1.75 when you retail if for 2 times cost will sometimes make you the same or more than a lower cost item that you retail for 3 times cost. I'll give you an example:

Haagen-Dazs or Dove Bar:

Cost: \$1.75

Retail: \$3.50 (2 times wholesale or 2 X \$1.75)

Profit: \$1.75

Fruit Bar or Snicker's Ice Cream Bar:

Cost \$.75

Retail: \$2.25 (3 times wholesale or 3 X \$.75)

Profit: \$1.50

In the above example, the Haagen-Dazs bar, at 2 (2 X \$1.75 = \$3.50) wholesale nets you more dollar profit than the Fruit Bar at 3 times wholesale.

A Nelson BDC-8 Push cart can hold 500 to 800 single novelties, depending on your mix of items. Assuming your average novelty item sells for \$2, you can have \$1200 to \$1600 dollars worth of retail inventory in your cart. A pretty good sales day if you go through it all.

If you target a daily take home profit of \$200 for a typical event, your target sales revenue would be about \$550 and your profit and loss statement could look like this (assuming you will get about 250 customers that day):

Sales Revenue	\$550
Cost of Goods Sold (what you paid for the novelties)	<u>\$250</u>
Gross Profit (profit before expenses)	\$300

Less:

Site Fee or Daily Rent	(\$ 50)
Bank Loan (\$400 month payment divided by 10 events in month)	(\$ 40)
Gas to get back and forth from location	(\$ 10)
Day's Profit	\$200
Months Profit	\$2000 (10 selling days X 200 per day)

If you were selling Italian Ice (more profitable but not necessarily more sales) , which you could buy for an average of about \$20 per 2.5 gallon tub (approx 50, 4oz servings out of a tub) your profit/loss statement for the day could look like this:

Sales Revenue (200 servings @ \$2 each)	\$400
Cost of Goods Sold (what you paid for the ice)	<u>\$80 (4 tubs X \$20)</u>
Gross Profit (profit before expenses)	\$320

Less:

Site Fee or Daily Rent	(\$ 50)
Bank Loan (\$400 month payment divided by 10 events in month)	(\$ 40)

Gas to get back and forth from location	(\$ 10)
Day's Profit	\$220
Months Profit	\$2200 (10 selling days X 220 per day)

This is a very general example of profitability. There are so many factors that will influence what kind of money you can make doing this and they are hard to list. You really have to use your common sense and find places where you can sell that have high foot traffic and little competition.

If you are selling Italian ice, below is a possible profitability scenario:

Chapter 4

WHERE WILL I SELL?

Rule #1 – Don't sign up and pay a deposit for any event until you have your cart and equipment. Many people will make the mistake of putting a deposit down on an event, then ordering their equipment. This is risky on many levels. You want to make sure you have everything you need with plenty of lead time before your first event. You also want to "practice". Store your novelties, and see how they hold up in the cart temperature wise the next day. If serving Italian ice, give it some time in the cart and get a feel for the how the product reacts throughout the day. You may find that you need to lower or raise the temperature. Bottom line is that you want to do some testing before your first major event.

Once you have your equipment and suppliers lined up, you can put down a deposit to reserve a spot in an event. You can do research before you buy your cart, just don't put down any \$ on an event you may not be completely ready for.

For starters, find out about events in your community and start establishing some contacts by simply picking up the phone and calling people to see if there is an opportunity to sell at their event.

Below are some tips you might use to find events:

- Visit the website, call or email your state department of tourism and request a copy of the annual state calendar of events. This is a great way to cut to the chase and find out what events might work for you.
- Call or email your local chamber of commerce and ask for a community event list
- Check local county websites for local event listings
- Check the website of your local state fair
- Watch your local newspaper for upcoming events

Once you've compiled a list of events, start dialing the phone and make sure you jot down your notes. Most places you call will most probably not answer the phone, but go ahead and leave a message and jot down that you did that. Then give them a follow up call. Eventually, you'll make contact. Most important thing to ask is if they are taking applications for ice cream or Italian ice vendors.

They will probably ask you what type of cart you have and the dimensions (to identify what type of space you will need) or exactly what brand or types of ice cream or Italian ice you plan on selling.

In order for you to decide whether this will be a profitable event for you or not, you need to be prepared to ask them a series of questions. Once you get more experience, you can start asking additional questions as you see fit. Here are some that will help you get started:

- How many people are expected to attend?
- What are the attractions that will pull people to the event?
- How many ice cream or Italian ice vendors will there be? (this will help you get a feel for how much competition you will have).
- What is the minimum space I can rent? Hint: The smallest space most well organized events will offer is a 10' x 10' space.

- Is there a policy against other vendors selling the same items – ie: is there a policy that will stop a burger vendor from also selling Italian ice or ice cream?
- How many vendors will there be in total? How many are coming back from last year (this might help show that it was profitable for many vendors – so much so that they decided to participate again).
- During what hours will the event be open for business?
- Will the event charge the public for parking?
- Will electricity be available (this might help you if you have a plug in type cart or if you need to have a back stock freezer at the event).

If the event sounds good, ask for an application. It is difficult to decide what events to attend, even when you are well organized and ask the right questions. If you are having a really hard time deciding, then you might want to go with the least expensive option.

One thing you will probably want to do is attend smaller community events first in order to get a feel for the business and for how you will serve customers. It will also help you get a feel for how much you can sell in a day if you are busy, how much back stock you need. In short, attending less expensive, smaller events is a great way to get some experience under your belt. Make your mistakes at smaller events and then graduate to larger more expensive venues as you learn the business.

Chapter 5 – What type of products will I sell:

- List of Italian ice vendors across the country
- List of Gelato vendors
- List of Ice Cream Manufacturers and Distributors
- Make your own:
 - The decision to make your own can lead to a more profitable business, but you better be ready to invest more from the start. You also need to be ready to work harder, as making your own product

can be very satisfying, but is also time consuming. Marketing your brand will also be a challenge. If you are creative and see yourself distributing your own brand someday, then this might be a great option for you.

- In my opinion, Emery Thompson makes the best batch freezers in the market. Emery Thompson has been making batch freezers in the USA for over 100 years. The machines are built to last and are easy to operate. To find out more about making your own products with an Emery Thompson batch freezer visit EmeryThompson.com
- For hardening, storing and dipping, TurnKeyParlor.com offers a wide range of equipment. Visit or call us and we'll recommend the best options for your specific venture.

CHAPTER 6 – Licensing and the Health Department

One of the first things you want to do is create a business identity, or business name. If you use any business name other than your last name, you will need to register a DBA (Doing Business As...) at your local county clerk's office. You don't need a business name to operate a push cart, but it may help you build credibility at your bank and with suppliers and event coordinators.

By default, your business will be a sole proprietorship. In other words, if you do nothing, you are a sole proprietorship. If you choose, you can create a corporation or a limited liability company or a partnership. I'm not a CPA, so I'm not authorized to tell you what is best or right for your specific situation, but in my opinion, you should keep things simple. The vast majority of small businesses are sole proprietorships. Most sole proprietorships can simply claim their profits on their tax returns as business income. So... keeping it simple is my recommendation.

The Health Department

The Health Department can be a pain, but be assured that they play an important role. It is easy to make someone sick with food and the inspectors play an important role in limiting this unfortunate aspect of the food business. It doesn't

feel good when your business is being judged, but be aware that the inspectors could one day save you from getting someone deathly sick. So rather than fight them, try to work with them cordially. In the end, everybody wins.

The type of license or and process of getting one may vary greatly depending on whether you are planning a temporary concession (events, parties, different locations on different days, etc.) vs. a permanent location. Permanent location permits are more difficult to get as they might require more out of your operation. If the health department thinks you are going to be in one spot, they will treat your operation more like a restaurant and might expect more. By more I mean, more structural requirements, water requirements, etc.

It used to be that the regulations were all over the place. Varying greatly from one county to the next and you could never tell if you were moving from one event to another if you met that county's requirements. Now however, counties are required to stick to more basic standards set by the state's regulations. This is a good thing because chances are if you meet the states requirements and move to do an event at a different county, you are probably within that county's requirements. That said, you should still make sure that you meet the county's requirements before you sign up for an event in a different county.

As an FYI, the name of the department that will issue your permit can vary – in some areas it's the Department of Agriculture. In others, permits are issues by the Health and Human Services Department. You might also check under the Department of Environmental Health.

Because the vast majority of people who bought this book will be planning a push cart business, we will focus on a Temporary Permit or otherwise called a Health Permit. Keep in mind that there is no black & white process here. Sometimes the necessary requirements are up to the interpretation of the specific inspector you deal with. But be assured that the requirements for a temporary permit are a little more lax.

A cart selling “non-hazardous” items – like pre-packaged ice cream novelties may not need any licensing at all. A cart dipping Italian ice may not need

refrigeration, or a sink. The requirement for a permit may simply be that each flavor has its own scoop, so that the scoops don't need to be washed off or put in a dip well. If you are going to dip ice cream, most health departments consider it a "hazardous" item, so be prepared for more intense requirements like a hand washing sink, a sanitizing sink, a dip well, a sneeze guard and more. Dipping ice cream might generate the most sales, but it may also cost you the most to get going. And if you are going to dip ice cream, you might have to have access to electricity to run the sink (pump requires 15 amps). That said, you can put together gravity fed systems for less and with some customization, make it happen for less and without the need for electricity (if you have cold plates).

Some health departments will require an inspection of your "commissary". This is a fancy word for the place where you will keep your cart, back up freezer and anything else you need to run your business. This could be your home, a warehouse or an area near where you will be selling from (some people will make deals with a nearby business or restaurant and pay a small rent fee to keep the stuff there. Other health departments do not have a requirement to inspect or license the commissary area.

The bottom line is that you will need to ask a lot of questions of your local county health department representative. Read a lot and familiarize yourself with all the requirements. This should all be done early in your business planning process, to ensure you make the right choices before you go out and buy equipment.

Food Handlers Card:

You will need to get a food handlers card. You simply take a multiple choice test that shows you understand the basics of food handling procedures. The card is good state wide, but if you are going to cross state lines, you should get that states food handlers card too.

Insurance:

Business liability insurance is a wise purchase, but it may not be necessary for all events. Get a feel for how many of the events you want to participate in will

require the insurance and then make a judgment on whether or not you want to make the investment. If you don't have it, make sure you are following all the rules and be as careful as possible to ensure that you do not make a mistake that will cost you.

CHAPTER 7 – MARKETING

Signage (POP – Point of Purchase)

Signs and product shots sell. It's called creating "appetite appeal". If you are selling a strong brand, take advantage of it and make sure that it is clearly visible to potential customers. If you aren't buying product from a company that supplies signage and product images, you should set aside \$250-\$300 to create a sign or banner and to have a local printer create some vinyl decals for your cart. If you are making your own product, or if the brand you are selling is not a house hold name, you should focus on product pictures and make sure you communicate this first and foremost – as the public won't care much about a brand or business name. They want to know what you have for sale. In short, visibility means sales. So make sure it is VERY clear what you are offering.

Product Quality

Yes, it matters. Even if you are doing a one time event. People talk, families talk, and if your product is good, more of them will buy. It seems like common sense, but some vendors are so focused on buying the lowest cost product that they seem to miss this important fact. If you are selling in a tourist area, many of these tourists come back year after year. So, if you want repeat sales, make sure you are selling a good product. In addition, many tourists are there for a week or more, so if they fall in love with your ice cream or Italian ice, they will come back again and again during their stay.

Pricing

Rule #1)

Don't be afraid to charge "too much". People have a tendency to price items too low because, early on, they don't understand their true expenses. There are hidden expenses (including your time) that many of us tend to overlook. There are also unexpected expenses that tend to come up that we don't account for. For example, the vehicle we use to transport the cart may break down and need to be repaired, or someone inadvertently unplugs the back stock freezer and \$300 worth of product melts. These are costs that will come up, and you need to make sure that you are pricing these potential expenses in.

In general, you should shoot for a retail price that is 3 times what your product costs you. If it costs you \$.80 per serving, charge at least \$3.50.

For events that are high cost (rent), you may want to charge 4 times your cost.

Another factor in pricing is rounding. You should include your sales tax in your pricing and you should round to the nearest quarter. Best case scenario you hit the dollar marks so that you don't have to make change in coins.

CHAPTER 8 – PLANNING:

- Define your Goal – What is it that you want to do. How much would you like to make. How many days a month do you want to work? Full time, part time?
- Attend events, scout potential locations around town that might be good for vending
- When attending these events, talk to other vendors. Get a feel for what they do and how they do it. Most people love to talk.
- Contact State and county health departments. Request a temporary and mobile licensing manual
- Research potential product suppliers

- Plan your storage and equipment needs. How will you transport your cart and where will you keep it and back up product.
- Calculate your total start up costs
- Understand your product costs and how much you will need to charge to make a solid profit
- Open a checking account specific to your business (can be in your name, but keep it separate – this will help keep you organized)
- Create a simple, basic business plan that includes:
 - General statement of what you want to do
 - Goals
 - Product you will sell and where you will sell it
 - Financial resources
 - Summary

Thanks for purchasing our Cart Vending Business Guide. We are interested in your feedback. Please let us know what could have made the book better. Maybe what you felt was not in the book that you were hoping was.

Thanks again,

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