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A PASSION FOR WORK

A guide to opening a **gelato shop** or introducing artisanal gelato to your establishment



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INTRODUCTION

Have you decided to open a **gelato shop**? Or are you thinking of adding artisanal gelato to your bar, restaurant, or pastry business?

If the answer is yes, it means **you share a passion for flavor, quality, and creativity** - values that define the world of authentic Italian artisanal gelato. Producing great gelato isn't just about technique: it's a true art that demands research, innovation, knowledge of raw materials, and above all, a deep passion.

Today, artisanal gelato is no longer seen as just a summertime treat. Thanks to its nutritional value, wide range of flavors, and growing appeal as a wholesome, balanced food, it's now enjoyed all year round. It's even become a lighter, satisfying alternative to a full meal - especially during warmer seasons.

However, opening a gelato shop is also a real entrepreneurial challenge. Like any successful business, it starts with a clear and structured vision: choosing the right location, undergoing proper technical training, selecting equipment, sourcing quality ingredients, understanding hygiene and food safety regulations, and building a smart communication strategy.

And then there's the creative side: experimenting with new flavors, responding to market trends (like vegan, high-protein, or no-added-sugar gelato), and working with local or premium Italian products. A gelato maker's daily job is a balance between craftsmanship and innovation, tradition and the ability to evolve with the market.

This guide is designed to support you in the first steps of your journey:

- ***We'll help you assess whether opening a gelato shop is the right move for you.***
- ***We'll offer practical advice on how to plan and launch your business.***
- ***We'll recommend the best training schools and Italian companies specializing in the gelato sector.***
- ***We'll share tips on how to stand out and create a unique, recognizable product offering.***

Italian artisanal gelato - like pizza and pasta - is a cultural and culinary treasure recognized around the world. Adding it to your business offering not only enhances your commercial potential, but also contributes to spreading a tradition that blends taste, wellness, and creativity.

If you have questions or want to explore a specific topic in more depth, feel free to contact us at **info@italiangelato.info**

We'll be happy to provide support, advice, and helpful contacts.
Enjoy the read and... may the gelato be with you!

The Italiangelato.info Team

WANT TO ENTER THE GELATO BUSINESS?

A guide for those dreaming of starting this sweet adventure

Italian artisanal gelato is now one of the most iconic symbols of Made in Italy worldwide. But opening a gelato shop is not just about knowing how to make good gelato - it's an entrepreneurial choice that can take many forms, from an independent laboratory to a gelato offering integrated into broader formats such as a gelato bar, pastry shop, or chocolate shop. Much like bread in a bakery, **gelato can become the signature product of businesses with different identities.**

The market is growing, both in Italy and abroad, but it is also constantly evolving. Alongside traditional gelato, complementary products like **gelato cakes, semifreddos, frozen pralines**, and even **coffee** or **aperitivo** menus are gaining popularity. These are smart strategies to expand the offering, extend seasonality, and diversify revenue - especially in regions where gelato is mainly consumed during the warmer months.

GELATO TYPES
A NECESSARY INTRODUCTION

Before diving into production processes, it's important to understand the **two main categories of traditional Italian artisanal gelato:**



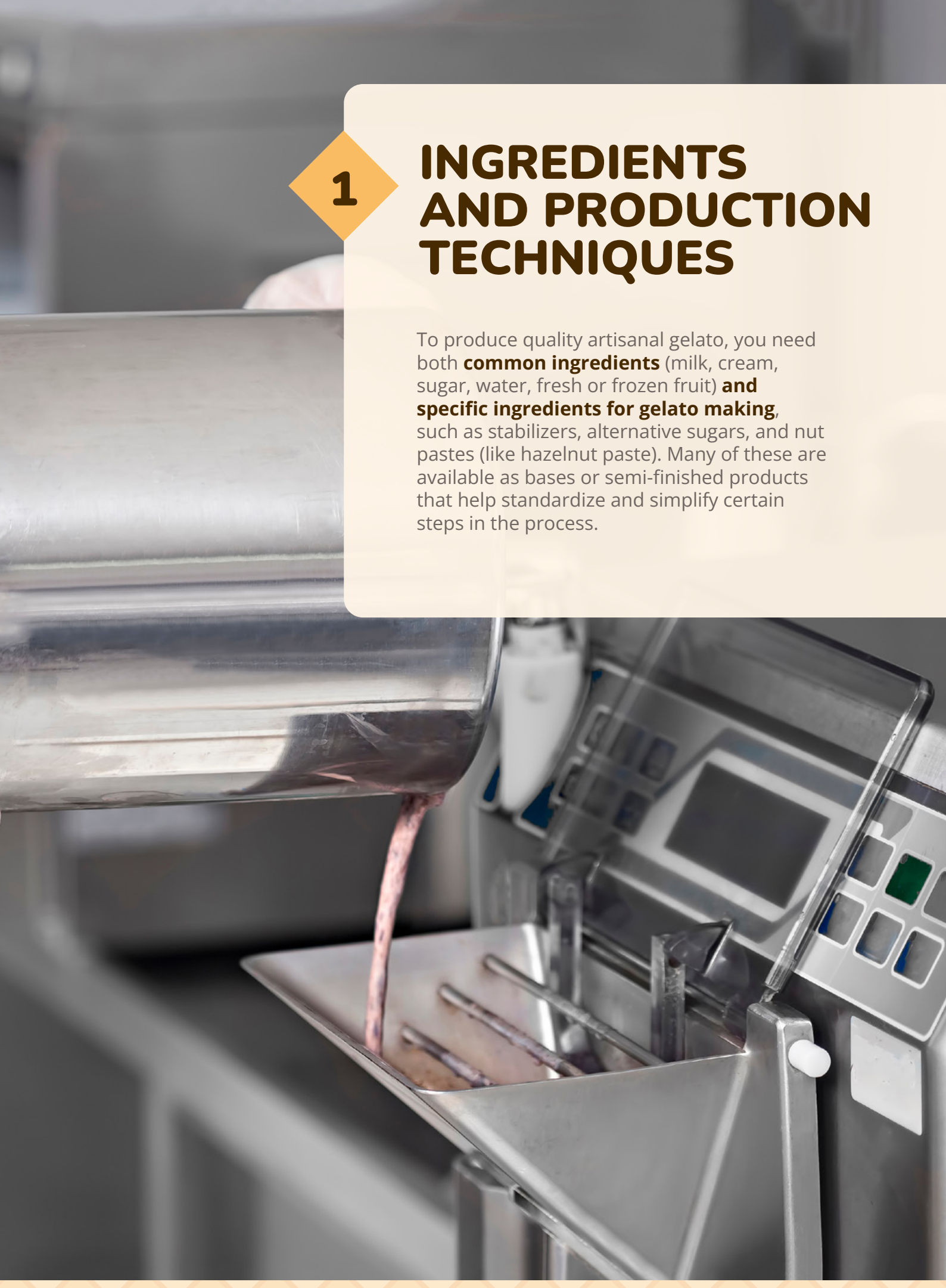
Milk-based flavors

(also known as "creams"), made with ingredients like milk, cream, sugar, and eggs.



Fruit-based flavors

often made in the form of sorbets without dairy, using water as a base. These are ideal for customers seeking lighter, vegan, or lactose-free options.



1 INGREDIENTS AND PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES

To produce quality artisanal gelato, you need both **common ingredients** (milk, cream, sugar, water, fresh or frozen fruit) **and specific ingredients for gelato making**, such as stabilizers, alternative sugars, and nut pastes (like hazelnut paste). Many of these are available as bases or semi-finished products that help standardize and simplify certain steps in the process.

Milk-based flavors are typically **pasteurized** - a process that heats and then rapidly cools the mixture to ensure microbiological safety and proper blending of the ingredients. Pasteurization can be done with dedicated machines or compact combination systems.

After a **maturation** phase (resting the mixture for 6 to 12 hours), the mix undergoes **batch freezing** - the phase where it is transformed into gelato through rapid cooling and air incorporation. This step is what gives gelato its signature creaminess.

Fruit sorbets, on the other hand, do not require pasteurization. The ingredients are simply **blended** at high speed and then **batch frozen**. Final serving temperatures range from –8°C to –12°C, slightly lower for fruit flavors due to their higher sugar content.

Once frozen, the gelato is **blast chilled** - rapidly cooled to preserve texture and safety - before being displayed in a showcase or stored in refrigerated wells.

Milk-based flavors

PASTEURIZATION

MATURATION

BATCH FREEZING



Fruit-based flavors

PASTEURIZATION

MATURATION

A business with many possibilities

Opening a gelato shop requires specific machines, equipment, and furnishings, but also allows for great creative and entrepreneurial freedom. Artisanal gelato can be the heart of a stand-alone business or an addition to a more complex format. The key is choosing the right model based on your local market, target customers, and available investment.

In the following sections, we'll explore these aspects in detail to help you shape your gelato business idea - step by step.

Soft Serve or “Espresso” Gelato

A special category of gelato is **soft serve**, also known as “espresso” gelato. This type is produced and served fresh at the moment of order, eliminating the need for storage and related investments. It’s called “soft” because the machines used to produce it incorporate more air into the mix, making it softer and served at a slightly higher temperature (about 3–4°C warmer than traditional gelato).

Soft serve machines usually produce **two flavors plus a swirl option**, which limits variety but allows quick service. This solution is especially popular in bars and restaurants that want to offer a few Italian-style flavors made on the spot. The most famous example of soft gelato is **frozen** yogurt.





Granitas

Granitas are an interesting business opportunity for gelato shops, particularly in summer months and tourist destinations. Refreshing, thirst-quenching, and naturally lactose-free, they are a great option for customers seeking a lighter alternative to gelato. They come in a wide variety of fruit or natural flavors, are easy to prepare and store, require a relatively low investment in equipment, and offer high profit margins.

Adding granitas to your menu can help attract new customers and meet growing demand for vegan or allergen-free products. A simple yet winning idea.



Frozen yogurt

Frozen yogurt is a fresh and trendy product made from a mix containing at least 20% fresh yogurt. It can be customized with a wide range of toppings: sauces, sprinkles, nuts, fresh or dried fruit. It's produced using soft serve machines, but with a specific cooling point (between –6°C and –7°C) to ensure a creamy texture.

This product is very popular in tourist areas and during the summer season, serving as a light, refreshing snack or even a meal replacement.



Gelato on a Stick and Gelato Cookies

Gelato on a stick and **gelato cookies** are trending again thanks to the rise of street food. These formats offer creative alternatives to classic cones and cups and can diversify your product lineup. Stick gelato can be made using specific machines or silicone molds, then blast chilled and stored in specialized display freezers. They can be made with either cream or fruit bases and decorated with melted chocolate, nuts, coconut flakes, and more.

Gelato cookies, on the other hand, come in various sizes - from large and indulgent to small and bite-sized treats. They are often displayed in upright freezers along with sticks and single-serve portions.

2

EXPANDING YOUR OFFERING WITH COMPLEMENTARY PRODUCTS

Offering a wider range of products to **extend the gelato season** and stay open year-round has become an increasingly important need in many parts of the world - not only for economic reasons but also to meet the growing demand for variety among customers.
So, how can you diversify your production to respond to these needs and opportunities? What are the best products to offer? The options are many. Let's explore them in detail



CHOCOLATE: BARS, BONBONS, PRALINES

Adding artisanal pralines and chocolates to your gelato business is a great way to enrich your offering with creativity and flavor, helping to build customer loyalty and attract new clientele.

Pralines are small filled chocolates made by hand, often decorated in artistic ways and rooted in a long-standing Belgian tradition. Originally, the term praline (from French) referred to a sugar-coated almond. The Belgian maître chocolatier Jean Neuhaus later reinvented the concept by coating fillings in melted chocolate, giving birth to what we now know as chocolate pralines.

Filled with hazelnut, pistachio, orange, coconut, or rich chocolate ganache, pralines can even be paired with gelato. The meeting of pastry artistry and traditional gelato-making gives rise to products that are as pleasing to the eye as they are to the palate.

GELATO CAKES

Gelato cakes can become true masterpieces of both flavor and presentation, adding originality and a festive touch to your display.

From classic cream-based combinations to exotic fruit creations with colorful toppings, gelato cakes are indulgent, eye-catching, and highly customizable. With the right tools - such as molds, spatulas, and decorating accessories - you can shape and design gelato cakes according to your preferences or seasonal trends

SEMIFREDDOS

Semifreddos are made using the same ingredients as traditional gelato. The base is typically composed of semi-whipped cream, sugars, thickeners, and stabilizers. This mixture is then flavored using the same pastes and ingredients found in modern gelato displays: hazelnut, fruit, chocolate, and more.

Presentation and creative pairings are key to offering a high-quality, appealing product that satisfies a wide range of customers.





BAVARIAN CREAMS (BAVARESI)

This creamy dessert, well-known around the world, is an elegant option to add to your product lineup.

Bavarian cream is a classic French pastry dessert made with milk, sugar, eggs, fresh cream, and gelatin. It first appeared in 19th-century France and gained international fame thanks to renowned pastry chefs who introduced it to European royal courts.

Like semifreddos, Bavarian creams can be flavored with gelato-style ingredients. The traditional version is simple - just the creamy base, sometimes layered with sponge cake soaked in liqueur or syrup. However, over time, many delicious variations have emerged: paired with fruit gelées, jams, chocolate, coffee, and all the most popular flavor profiles.

MINI TREATS AND BONBONS

Small indulgences like mini cones, gelato bonbons, and truffles offer bite-sized bursts of flavor and are perfect for more refined palates. They're made using gelato as a base and allow for great visual appeal and high-margin sales.

COFFEE PAIRINGS, MILKSHAKES & FROZEN DRINKS

To further expand your offering, don't forget all the gelato-based combinations with espresso: gelato affogatos, milkshakes, smoothies, and both alcoholic and non-alcoholic cocktails and long drinks. These products are ideal for cafes, bars, and restaurants looking to integrate gelato into their menus.

Why Diversify?

*Diversifying your gelato offering is a smart strategy to increase business opportunities. It's important not only to expand your range of flavors but also to develop **different consumption** formats for different occasions - without limiting your creativity.*
*In many cases, the required investment is relatively low (e.g., mixers, molds, take-away packaging), and many of the same ingredients used in gelato production can be repurposed. For example, **gelato pastes and variegates** work perfectly for semifreddos and other specialties.*

3

CAFÉS, RESTAURANTS, PASTRY SHOPS

A gelato format for every business

A traditional Italian gelato shop is certainly not the only way to enter the gelato business. On the contrary, artisanal gelato offers exciting opportunities for food professionals who want to enrich their product range. Thanks to new ingredient and equipment solutions, Italian-style gelato can now be introduced into a wide variety of establishments - from cafés and pastry shops to restaurants and even foodservice chains.

Offering high-quality gelato alongside other menu items can help increase sales - not just during the summer months. Most importantly, offering products suitable for different times of day allows you to tap into multiple consumption occasions: breakfast, lunch, dinner, as well as mid-morning snacks, afternoon treats, and late-night cravings.

However, turning this opportunity into real revenue growth often means securing additional licenses, having more space, investing in trained staff for various roles, and setting up the necessary equipment - and sometimes seating areas. Let's take a closer look at the main guidelines to follow if you want to serve gelato alongside other products in your business.

Want to serve gelato in your **pastry shop?**



- *Gelato expands the pastry shop's offerings*
- *Two options: soft-serve or artisanal*
- *Soft-serve is quick and space-saving*
- *The bakery expands its range and value*

The **first**, simpler and more compact, involves introducing **soft serve gelato** or **express gelato**, served directly in cones or cups and customized with toppings, sauces, or crunchy add-ons. These machines can typically offer two flavors at a time, are easy to use, and do not require pasteurization - since the mix is processed cold and poured directly into the machine. This is an ideal solution for small spaces and allows for variety by using multiple machines.

The **second**, more structured approach involves installing professional equipment directly into the pastry lab (after checking local health regulations). This investment enables the production of high-quality artisanal gelato, displayed in showcases or refrigerated wells with a broader range of flavors. It also allows the lab to produce gelato cakes, artisanal popsicles, and semifreddos - highlighting the synergy between pastry and gelato making.

Even with a limited range of 8–10 flavors, artisanal gelato enriches your product selection and can be served alongside classic pastries - for example, paired with a slice of cake or a small dessert. This improves your shop's competitiveness, especially in summer, while offering your customers new tasting experiences.



Want to serve gelato in your *café?*

- ***Gelato enhances the café's offerings***
- ***Better to have fewer flavors, but always fresh***
- ***Flexible solutions tailored to the space***
- ***Less equipment than a full-scale gelateria***

In recent years, serving Italian-style gelato in cafés - especially during warmer seasons - has become increasingly popular, particularly in Italy. The café-gelato combo is an appealing format that helps broaden the product offer.

In this context, flavor selection is usually limited to a few classics like hazelnut, pistachio, vanilla cream, chocolate, and fior di latte. Why? Because it's better to serve fewer flavors and prepare them more frequently to keep the gelato fresh and of consistently high quality.

Available space for gelato prep and equipment is the key factor in deciding what kind of products you can offer. If space is limited, you might consider small-scale production using **combo machines, soft serve machines, or artisanal stick gelato** options. It's always essential to balance variety with customer preferences.

Because cafés are not fully dedicated to gelato, the amount of machinery and equipment will be limited compared to a traditional gelateria, and the display counter will have fewer tubs or wells. That said, in Italy especially, there are large café-gelaterias with a full range of traditional flavors and complete back-of-house equipment. Everything depends on how much space you want to allocate for flavor displays - even **mobile showcases** can be used for summer outdoor service.

Want to serve gelato in your **restaurant?**



- *Gelato in restaurants is on the rise*
- *It offers creativity and innovative combinations*
- *Compact solutions designed for the kitchen*
- *Versatile, fast, and easily adaptable to the menu*

Offering Italian artisanal gelato in restaurants and trattorias is still a growing trend. Few venues currently produce genuine, traditional gelato to serve as dessert or to use in original, experimental recipes.

However, this is changing. High-quality gelato is gaining ground in fine dining, where chefs are becoming increasingly open to creative pairings and carefully curated dessert menus. As a result, gelato ingredient and equipment suppliers are now offering new solutions specifically designed to meet the needs of restaurant kitchens.

In the kitchen, space optimization, portion control, and speed of execution are key. These three factors are essential to guarantee both high-quality service and consistent product standards.

On top of that, gelato offers exclusivity, low cost, fast execution, and easy menu rotation - making it a highly versatile tool for restaurants of all kinds.

The restaurant segment is promising for both gelato makers - who can expand their business by supplying restaurants - and chefs, who can create gourmet desserts or even **savory gelato** options. But how can you serve excellent gelato in a restaurant setting?

The range of possibilities is wide: traditional gelato, fruit sorbets, savory gelato, custards, semifreddos, Bavarian creams, chocolate specialties, and even freshly whipped cream. There are dedicated machines and ingredients for each of these offerings.

It's worth noting that **combo machines** - which mix, pasteurize, and freeze in one unit - are available in both countertop and floor-standing models. There are also **compact vertical batch freezers** that let you make fresh gelato right in front of customers. You just need to choose the solution that best fits your available space and operational needs.



4 EQUIPMENT AND MACHINERY

Required to open a traditional gelato shop

To open an artisanal gelato shop in line with Italian tradition, it is essential to invest in a range of specialized equipment that ensures quality, safety, efficiency, and respect for raw materials. **Italy is the global leader in the production of gelato-making machinery** - both for the domestic and international markets - thanks to decades of experience and high manufacturing standards. Italian manufacturers, represented by **ACOMAG** (the National Association of Manufacturers of Machinery, Furnishings and Equipment for Gelato), guarantee **top-quality materials, energy efficiency, reliable technical support, and full compliance with international regulations**.

STORAGE AND DISPLAY EQUIPMENT

There are two main systems for storing and serving gelato: **refrigerated display cases** and **carapine wells** (also known as pozzetti).



Display cases

Allow you to visually showcase your product to customers, making it easier for them to choose and enhancing the appeal of the gelato. However, they require more maintenance and, unless using state-of-the-art technology, may expose the gelato to temperature fluctuations. They come in **static** or **ventilated** models; ventilated cases offer better product presentation and decoration.



Pozzetti counters

Either static or ventilated, offer optimal gelato preservation thanks to their airtight seal, though they limit product visibility and reduce direct customer interaction. They are ideal for shops with a loyal customer base, while display cases work better in high-foot-traffic areas such as shopping centers or tourist locations.

ESSENTIAL GELATO PRODUCTION MACHINES

Pasteurizer

The pasteurizer heats the base mixture to reduce bacterial load, improve ingredient solubility, and ensure a homogeneous blend. After heating (at 65°C or 85°C), the mixture is cooled to 4°C for storage or maturation.



Models include **glycol-bath** or **dry-bath** systems, often programmable for different cycles.

- ***High pasteurization (85°C):*** enhances ingredient dissolution.
- ***Low pasteurization (65°C):*** better preserves delicate flavors.

The **maturation phase**, lasting from 4 to 12 hours, enhances aroma, improves emulsion stability, creaminess, and display-case shelf life. Maturation can occur in the pasteurizer itself or in **chilled tanks** with gentle stirring to maintain consistent temperature.

Batch Freezer

The batch freezer turns the liquid mix into creamy gelato by rapidly cooling and churning the mix while incorporating air for a soft, stable texture.



Types of batch freezers include:

- ***Traditional vertical models:*** manually operated, ideal for visible, artisanal preparation and for mixes with inclusions (fruit, chocolate, cookies).
- ***Vertical with automatic extraction:*** user-friendly and efficient.
- ***Horizontal with automatic extraction:*** allows greater air incorporation - ideal for cream-based flavors
- ***Horizontal with integrated heating cylinder:*** offers pasteurization as well, combining two functions in one.
- ***Combined models:*** feature two chambers (one for heating, one for freezing) and offer full control over the recipe, though they require constant supervision.

Each type has unique advantages

Vertical machines are great for sorbets and textured inclusions, while horizontal machines are preferred for high-fat and protein-rich cream flavors.

COOLING AND STORAGE MACHINES

Blast Freezer (Shock Freezer)

Used immediately after the batch freezing stage, blast chilling is now a standard step in gelato production.



It involves rapid freezing via a high-powered freezer, which:

- ***Stabilizes the gelato***, by preventing large ice crystal formation.
- ***Maintains creaminess*** by preserving micro-air bubbles.
- ***Improves display-case shelf life.***
- Can also be used to ***freeze seasonal fruits, cold pastries, and semifreddos.***

Blast freezers typically operate at around –40°C with forced air circulation, quickly removing heat and moisture from the product.

Refrigerated Cabinets

Every gelato lab requires professional refrigerators, essential for storing both raw materials and finished products.



There are two main types:

- ***Positive-temperature fridges (1–7°C):*** used to store milk, cream, fruit, and other fresh ingredients.
- ***Negative-temperature freezers (–15°C to –25°C):*** for storing gelato before it's placed in the display case or for long-term preservation.

Retail refrigerators, often made of stainless steel with glass doors and internal shelves, also serve an **aesthetic function** - especially for displaying semifreddos and gelato cakes. These units must offer **precise temperature and humidity control** and feature an appealing design, as they are visible to the public.

*Italian manufacturers associated with **ACOMAG** are also leaders in producing **refrigerated display and storage units**, meeting the highest standards in energy efficiency and material quality.*

5 RAW MATERIALS AND INGREDIENTS



CHOOSING INGREDIENTS

To obtain a good product, both raw materials (milk, eggs, sugar, fruit) and semi-finished products specific to gelato making must be selected and purchased with the utmost care. The market now offers many products specifically developed for gelato making, created to meet some practical needs of gelato makers: better preservation of raw materials, reduced preparation time, hygienic guarantees, and binding functions to maintain the ideal texture.

High-quality ingredients have an optimal balance of components, ensuring the final product has the right consistency, a delicious and healthy flavor, and is hygienically safe.

To churn gelato properly - meaning to mix, cool, and incorporate air to achieve the desired texture - the solid and liquid parts must be blended as thoroughly as possible. This ensures that water particles freeze finely and an adequate amount of air is incorporated. To achieve this, it is essential to start with a recipe that considers and respects specific parameters and percentages of sugars, fats, and total solids.

In modern gelato laboratories, this is achieved through the use of balanced and selected compound ingredients: neutral bases and more or less complete bases capable of stabilizing the gelato mix without altering its organoleptic properties while ensuring creaminess and scoopability of the final product. Depending on individual needs, seasonality, and customer preferences, a variety of ingredients and semi-finished products can be used for different purposes.

Let's now take a look at the types of products used in gelato making.

INGREDIENTS IN TRADITIONAL ITALIAN ARTISANAL GELATO

To produce traditional Italian gelato, an artisan can choose from a wide range of ingredients depending on their needs and the preferences of their customers. Common ingredients include milk, sugar, water, cream, eggs, milk powder and fruit.

Other ingredients are less known to the consumer because they are specific to artisanal gelato and are called **compound (or semi-finished) ingredients** for gelato making. These ingredients are intended for professional use to produce high-quality gelato. Compound ingredients can be classified as follows, according to the function they are intended to serve and the different preparation methods used by gelato makers.

Common ingredients

Milk, sugar, water, cream, eggs, milk powder and fruit



Compound ingredients

Neutrals, Bases, powdered or paste semi-finished ingredients, ready-to-use and ingredients for variegation and decoration



POWDERED INGREDIENTS FOR BASE MIXES

This category includes all powdered blends of raw materials that stabilize and enhance the gelato base mix. They can be divided into:

Neutrals

Ingredients that contribute to the structure of the gelato without affecting its flavor (hence the term “Neutral” flavor category). These are mixtures with stabilizing and emulsifying functions. This family includes thickeners such as carob seed flour, guar gum, or tara gum, and emulsifiers like lecithins and mono- and diglycerides of fatty acids.

Generally, the dosage is 5g/kg of gelato.

Gelato bases

Bases are mixes of raw materials, often in powder form, that integrate the Neutral with other ingredients that provide body, structure, creaminess, sweetness, and flavor to the gelato. Powdered bases vary according to dosage and ingredient composition. They typically consist of a core of stabilizers and emulsifiers, along with milk powder, milk proteins, sugars and derivatives, fibers, and plant proteins, which improve the gelato’s qualities.

The usual dosage ranges from 30 to 150 g/kg.

FLAVORING SEMI-FINISHED INGREDIENTS FOR BASE MIXES

These are typical Italian preparations that give flavor and define the specific gelato taste. They can be divided into:

Powdered flavoring ingredients

May be added to base mixes before or after pasteurization, in variable concentration depending on the desired flavor intensity in the final product.

Examples include cocoa powder preparations, freeze-dried coffee, licorice powder, powdered yogurt, and powdered cheeses.

Paste flavoring ingredients

Can be added before or after pasteurization, also in variable concentrations, depending on the desired flavor intensity. These pastes fall into three main categories based on their composition:

- ***Fat-based pastes***: made from roasted and refined nuts, possibly with added sugars and other ingredients (e.g., vegetable oils and fats, cocoa, colorants, flavorings). Examples: hazelnut paste, pistachio paste, almond paste, gianduja, chocolate.

- ***Sugar-based pastes***: made from sugar syrups and combined with eggs, coffee, mascarpone, condensed milk, egg yolk, wines and other alcoholic substances, flavorings, and colorants.

- ***Fruit pastes***: made with fruit and sugars, citric acid, pectin, flavorings, and colorants. They are used along with fresh fruit in some gelato recipes to enhance flavor when the maturity of the fruit used is insufficient to create a flavorful gelato.



READY-TO-USE COMPLETE INGREDIENTS

Powdered, paste, or liquid preparations with a complete composition (including all base ingredients, structuring agents, and flavorings) allow for the quick preparation of cream or fruit gelato with no additional ingredients except water and/or milk, depending on the recipe. In some cases, pasteurization is not even necessary.

INGREDIENTS FOR VARIEGATION AND DECORATION

This category includes a wide range of ready-to-use products for decorating gelato. These may be based on sugar syrups or honey, chocolate or cocoa, coffee or infusions, nuts, preserves and preparations from fruits and vegetables, fruit juices and pulp, candied or syrupy fruit, and alcoholic products.



WHERE TO FIND THE BEST INGREDIENTS FOR GELATO

THE INGREDIENTS COMPANIES: THE INNOVATIVE CORE OF ITALIAN ARTISANAL GELATO

In the world of artisanal gelato, ingredients make all the difference. Behind every cone or cup that delights the palate, there is a silent and constant work of research, quality, and passion. Representing this universe are the companies of the Gelato Products Group of **Unione Italiana Food**, leading businesses that, since the second half of the last century, have been supplying bases, pastes, creams, flavorings, and all the essential components needed to create good, safe, and increasingly innovative artisanal gelato.

This article highlights who they are, what they do, and how they contribute - day after day - to preserving and advancing the tradition and future of Italian gelato around the world.

https://www.italiangelato.info/supply-chain/companies/companies-ingredients-semi-finished-products.kl



6 PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

How to become a gelato maker?

Professional training and continuous education are key elements in ensuring the excellence of Italian artisanal gelato. In an increasingly competitive market, the professionalism of the gelato maker is not only an added value, but a real necessity to meet the growing expectations of consumers, who are more and more attentive to product quality.

The numerous training courses available in Italy and abroad have a dual purpose: to train competent gelato makers and to protect the tradition of artisanal gelato. These courses provide artisans with the tools to create high-quality products that are healthy and appreciated by the public. In addition to technical aspects, training includes skills related to food safety, hygiene, temperature management, and fundamental knowledge of HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points). Equally important is training in marketing and communication, which is now essential for attracting and retaining customers.

In Italy, numerous training institutions offer courses at various levels, from introductory to more advanced programs.

BASIC COURSE

generally lasting 3-4 days, provides a theoretical and practical overview of artisanal gelato, covering topics such as lab design, ingredient balancing techniques, how to obtain a high-quality final product, how to manage a gelato shop, and how to serve the product effectively. These courses are ideal for those who wish to open a gelato shop, as well as professionals who want to refine their craft.

ADVANCED COURSES

offer in-depth knowledge of processing techniques, the chemical composition of ingredients, and advanced lab management. These are designed for gelato makers who want to perfect their trade or improve the quality of their business. Hands-on training in a lab, with the opportunity to interact directly with teachers and industry professionals, is a fundamental opportunity to gain practical experience.

EVENTS AND TRADE FAIRS

events like the Sigep trade fair in Rimini, held annually, offer further opportunities for professional development. Here, gelato makers from all over the world engage in competitions, seminars, and masterclasses, strengthening the culture of quality and innovation in the sector. Participating in such events allows not only for enriching one's education but also for connecting with industry leaders and discovering the latest trends.

In short, professional training remains a fundamental pillar for anyone wishing to pursue a career as a gelato maker and offer a product that respects tradition while also innovating to meet modern consumer demands.



Gelato Schools

https://www.italiangelato.info/training/find-your-gelato-maker-course-schools-programs-and-specializations.kl

7

WHERE TO OPEN A GELATO SHOP

The importance of location

Choosing the right location is one of the most crucial decisions when opening a gelato shop. A significant investment in terms of time, resources, and money cannot be made without a careful evaluation of where the store will be located. A good location can, in fact, determine the success or failure of the business. Therefore, it is essential to consider a number of factors, including foot traffic, the presence of competitors, visibility, and accessibility.



TERRITORIAL ANALYSIS AND GEOMARKETING

1

To choose the ideal location, it is important to use tools such as **geomarketing**, which analyzes territorial features, traffic flows, competition, and consumer behavior. This type of analysis helps identify the most promising areas for opening a gelato shop, based on the density of potential customers and their buying behavior.

Pedestrian areas or **shopping streets** with high foot traffic are ideal for a gelato shop. Customers strolling or shopping are often more inclined to stop for a gelato. **Seaside promenades** or **tourist areas** can also represent interesting opportunities, especially during the summer season when the flow of visitors increases. Additionally, AI can be very helpful in selecting a location, especially when the right parameters are given and clear requests are made.

PROXIMITY TO COMPETITORS

2

Although the presence of other competitors might seem like an obstacle, in reality, a **concentration of gelato shops** in a given area can be beneficial, creating a "**destination**" effect. This is often the case in high-tourist-traffic areas, where multiple gelato shops attract a wider audience.

However, it is important not to open a gelato shop in an already saturated area, especially if the product offered is not significantly different from what is already on the market. Market analysis and defining a unique product are therefore essential.

ACCESSIBILITY AND PARKING

3

If the intention is to offer a sit-down service with **tables** and **chairs**, the **proximity of parking** is a determining factor. Customers who want to enjoy gelato on the premises will appreciate the ease of parking.

A location with nearby **public parking** greatly improves accessibility, making the gelato shop a convenient and attractive choice.

HIGH FOOT TRAFFIC AND PROXIMITY TO SCHOOLS AND OFFICES

4

Having the shop in a **high-foot-traffic area**, such as near **schools**, **offices**, and **universities**, allows you to attract a constant and diverse clientele.

These areas experience a continuous flow of people, many of whom might stop for gelato at the end of the day or during a break.

CITY CENTER OR SUBURBAN LOCATION

5

The **geographical location** also affects selling prices and pricing strategy.

A gelato shop located in the **city center**, possibly in a tourist or high-traffic area, can afford to apply **higher prices** due to greater visibility and the type of clientele. On the other hand, a shop in the **suburbs** may need to **adjust prices to the average income** of local residents, which may be lower than that of central areas, but can count on a stable and loyal customer base.

RENT COSTS AND INVESTMENT

6

In addition to pricing strategy, rental costs can vary drastically **depending on the location**. While central areas tend to have higher rents, suburban areas may allow significant savings on initial costs.

However, rent costs must always be balanced with visibility and the potential customer flow.

*In conclusion, choosing the right location for a gelato shop requires a strategic and careful evaluation. The **combination of visibility, accessibility, competition, and target clientele** is fundamental to success. A thorough analysis of different areas and consumer behavior, supported by tools like geomarketing, can make all the difference in bringing your business to success.*



AI role

Today, AI-based tools allow for quick and precise analysis of data on foot traffic, rent prices, competition, and demographic targets.

Using these tools to choose the ideal location for a gelato shop can make the difference between a simple opening and a true commercial success.

8 THE BUSINESS PLAN FOR AN ITALIAN ARTISAN GELATO SHOP

Opening an artisan gelato shop is an exciting entrepreneurial project that requires awareness, preparation, and a clear vision. Once the necessary technical and managerial skills are acquired, the first concrete step is drafting a business plan - an essential tool to plan the development of the business and assess its economic sustainability.



WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE BUSINESS PLAN?

The business plan allows you to:

- *Define the mission and positioning of the brand (traditional gelato shop, gourmet, innovative, takeaway, etc.);*
- *Identify the target clientele and ideal product offering;*
- *Accurately estimate initial and recurring costs;*
- *Assess potential revenues and expected net profit;*
- *Present the business credibly to potential investors or banks to obtain funding.*

WHAT ARE THE MAIN COSTS TO CONSIDER?

The most significant expenses to include in the business plan are:

PREMISES AND STRUCTURE

PROFESSIONAL EQUIPMENT AND MACHINERY

OPERATING AND MANAGEMENT

1. PREMISES AND STRUCTURE

- Rent or purchase of the property (depending on location and size);
- Renovation and compliance with health regulations;
- Minimum size: at least 40 sqm for lab and retail; 100 sqm if seating and on-site consumption are planned.

It is recommended to consult the relevant municipal offices where the shop will open.

2. PROFESSIONAL EQUIPMENT AND MACHINERY

- Pasteurizer, batch freezer or combined machine, blast freezer, refrigerated cabinets (positive and negative);
- Refrigerated display cases and serving counters;
- Laboratory tools: immersion blender, planetary mixer, cream whipper, scales, temperature control instruments;
- Serving accessories: cones, cups, takeout tubs, paddles, napkins, custom bags.

3. OPERATING AND MANAGEMENT COSTS

- Raw materials: the cost of ingredients accounts for about 15–20% of the final price of the gelato, depending on the quality and type of products (milk, cream, fresh fruit, etc.);
- Electricity (one of the most significant items due to the need to keep refrigeration systems constantly active);
- Staff salaries (if any), contributions, and insurance;
- Professional consulting (accountant, HACCP advisor, etc.);
- Communication and marketing: signage, website, social media, promotional materials.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO OPEN A GELATO SHOP?

The initial investment for a medium-sized artisan gelato shop can be estimated at around **€140,000 to €170,000**, but it can increase significantly depending on:

- *Area and visibility of the location;*
- *Size of the premises;*
- *Quantity and quality of selected machines;*
- *Level of interior finishing;*
- *Breadth of the product range (gelato, cold pastries, drinks, etc.).*



WHY BUSINESS PLAN IS ESSENTIAL?

A well-crafted business plan reduces business risks, allows you to anticipate and correct critical issues, and provides a solid foundation for monitoring the business over time. It is the starting point to transform a passion into a profitable and sustainable business. It must include a P&L and a document summarizing initial investments.

From Artisan Entrepreneur to Business Owner: Opening a Small Chain of Gelato Shops

For an ambitious gelato maker, turning passion into a structured business project is the next natural step. Opening a small chain of gelato shops with a centralized lab allows for cost optimization, more efficient production, and consistent quality standards at each sales point.

With this model, each shop requires fewer machines and less specialized staff, reducing the initial investment per store. Centralized production also enables better raw material management, minimizing waste and offering greater cost control.
To be successful, shops should be geographically close, and the brand must be recognizable and consistent, including in customer experience. Communication, product presentation, and service must speak the same language.
Tip: before expanding, build a replicable format and test it in the first or second location - this is the key to sustainable and profitable growth.

STRUCTURE OF THE PROJECTED PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT (P&L)

The projected P&L allows you to estimate the revenues and expenses of the gelato shop during the first year of business.



SAMPLE PROFIT & LOSS STATEMENT
(ANNUAL IN EUROS)

Item	*Amount €*
Gelato sales revenue	150,000
Other revenue (drinks, pastries, etc.)	30,000
Total Revenue	**180,000**
Variable costs (ingredients, packaging, etc.)	(50,000)
Gross Margin	**130,000**
Fixed costs (rent, salaries, utilities, marketing)	(80,000)
Operating Profit	**50,000**
Taxes	(10,000)
Net Profit	**40,000**

INITIAL INVESTMENT: A SAMPLE BUDGET

To clarify things, here is an estimate of the initial investment required to start this type of business. The figures in the table below refer to indicative market values for a small gelato shop, and the estimated depreciation is based on a sample business operating about 250 days per year. These amounts should be adjusted according to the local market, as significant differences may exist from country to country.

Investments	*Amount (€)*	*Depreciation period (years)*	*Annual depreciation (€)*
Training	2,000	5	400
Feasibility study	2,500	5	500
Accountant	1,000	5	200
Notary	1,500	5	300
Registration in the register of artisan businesses	300	2	150
Other bureaucratic compliance costs	1,500	5	300
Utility connection/subscription	300	2	150
Branding and coordinated image	1,500	5	300
Launch promotion	2,500	5	500
Tangible investments			
Building works and premises setup	25,000	10	2,500
Signs/plaques	2,000	6	333
Lighting	2,000	8	250
Furniture and equipment	85,000/110,000	10/13	8,500
Tubs, cones, cups	2,000	1	2,000
Cleaning equipment	1,500	6	250
Other equipment	5,000	5	1,000
Ingredients	10,000	1	10,000
Total investments	**145,600/170,600**		
Total annual depreciation			**17,133**

9 DESIGN AND CARE OF THE RETAIL SHOP

Attention to detail is essential, especially when opening a gelato shop that cannot yet rely on word of mouth or an established tradition. The quality of the gelato is the foundation of the business, but its presentation plays a crucial role in winning over customers. The artisanal gelato maker must remember that visual pleasure is fundamental and often precedes taste.



THE IMPORTANCE OF A WELCOMING ATMOSPHERE

The customer's first impression of the shop is key to their overall experience and the chance of turning them into a loyal client. When someone walks into a gelato shop, they should immediately sense a well-maintained environment where nothing is left to chance. Furnishings, colors, lighting, and space arrangement should be designed to create a harmonious atmosphere that stimulates all five senses. Music, for example, should be carefully selected so as not to be intrusive, but to accompany the purchasing experience.

Tips to create an inviting environment:

COLORS AND MATERIALS

Warm and natural tones (such as wood or beige) can evoke freshness and authenticity, while white and blue are often associated with cleanliness and freshness - ideal for a gelato shop. Colorful accents inspired by gelato flavors can add a lively touch without being overwhelming.

LIGHTING

Lighting should be adjusted to enhance the product without being too harsh or cold. Soft lighting in seating areas and more direct light on the display cases or counters can create a cozy, inviting atmosphere.

CLEANLINESS

Cleanliness and order are imperative. Display cases must always shine, and surfaces should be well maintained to avoid any perception that the environment's care reflects poorly on the gelato's quality.



A customer who feels immersed in a thoughtfully designed atmosphere is more inclined to associate that same quality with the shop and, consequently, with the product they are about to enjoy.

VISUAL MARKETING: THE ART OF PRESENTING GELATO

An essential aspect of shop care is the **presentation of the gelato itself**. Display cases must be carefully arranged, with tubs and containers that not only preserve the right temperature but also make each flavor clearly visible and attractive. The arrangement should spark customer curiosity by making the flavors easy to identify and appealing.

FLAVOR PRESENTATION

Using glass or transparent tubs can enhance the perception of freshness and cleanliness. That's why it's especially important - particularly in the initial phase of opening - to produce limited or appropriate amounts of gelato to offer customers a product that's always "fresh daily." Also, organizing the flavors and possibly adding small labels that share the story of each gelato or its ingredients can add perceived value and differentiate your offer from that of other shops.

SERVICE TIMES

A well-organized gelato shop allows for fast and efficient service, avoiding customer frustration due to long waits. Training staff to be courteous and quick contributes to a positive customer experience.



MARKETING TODAY: NOT JUST QUALITY, BUT COMMUNICATION

In today's context-marked by increasing competition and a wide range of offerings-customer loyalty is a real challenge. For a gelato maker, creating an emotional connection with customers is essential. This depends not only on product quality but also on how it is communicated and presented.

Strategies for effective marketing:

- ***Social Media***
- ***Promotions and Loyalty Programs***
- ***Themed and Seasonal Events***
- ***Engaging with the Local Community***
- ***Sustainability and Quality Ingredients***



SOCIAL MEDIA

Use platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok to tell your story, showcase artisanal production, highlight seasonal flavors, and share behind-the-scenes insights into your preparation process. Eye-catching photos of gelato and moments of enjoyment can attract customers and encourage them to visit and share their experience.

PROMOTIONS AND LOYALTY PROGRAMS

Offering special discounts, freebie coupons, or loyalty cards (e.g., a free gelato after a certain number of purchases) can encourage customers to return regularly. It's important to make customers feel appreciated for their choices.

THEMED AND SEASONAL EVENTS

Organizing events related to the world of gelato (such as tastings, meet-and-greets with local ingredient producers) or creating limited-edition seasonal flavors can grab attention and give customers an extra reason to come back.

ENGAGING WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Being an active part of the local community is a powerful form of marketing. Collaborations with other local businesses, such as restaurants or artisanal shops, can increase visibility and enhance brand perception.

SUSTAINABILITY AND QUALITY INGREDIENTS

Today's consumers are increasingly sensitive to ingredient quality and the environmental impact of their choices. Communicating your use of fresh, organic, or locally sourced ingredients, along with sustainable practices (like biodegradable cones or eco-friendly packaging), can attract a conscientious and engaged audience.

PARTICIPATING IN TRADE FAIRS, COMPETITIONS, AND JOINING TRADE ASSOCIATIONS

For a gelato maker who wants to grow and stand out, it's not enough to be present online and in-store. Participating in trade fairs and competitions, in addition to being a visibility opportunity, also allows you to connect with top industry professionals and stay up to date on new trends and techniques.

TRADE FAIRS

1

Gelato expos like **Sigep in Rimini** or other international events are must-attend occasions to meet suppliers, discover new equipment and ingredients, and stay informed about innovations. Attending these fairs also enables you to engage with peers and receive direct feedback on your skills.

GELATO COMPETITIONS

2

Competing in national and international contests not only improves your shop's reputation but also serves as an excellent way to test your artistic and technical abilities. Recognition in a prestigious competition can be a powerful marketing tool, boosting customer confidence and enhancing brand authority.

TRADE ASSOCIATIONS

3

Joining professional associations offers numerous benefits, including access to exclusive events, continuous training support, and insider information. These associations also serve as a unified voice to promote and protect the interests of artisanal gelato.

Benefits of belonging to an association:

- ***Networking with other industry professionals.***
- ***Access to advanced training courses.***
- ***Visibility at events organized by the association.***
- ***Support and advice on regulations and market trends.***

In an increasingly competitive market, shop care and effective communication are key to a gelato shop's success. Investing in the aesthetic aspect of the space, in product presentation, in targeted marketing strategies, and in the opportunities offered by trade fairs, competitions, and associations not only helps to stand out, but also attracts customers and builds loyalty. This way, the gelato entrepreneur doesn't just offer a quality product—they build a solid reputation and become a reference point in the industry.



10 OPENING A GELATO SHOP

All the bureaucratic aspects to check before getting started

Opening an artisanal gelato shop or adding gelato to a bar, restaurant, or foodservice outlet can be a profitable and strategic business opportunity. However, the success of the initiative also depends on proper management of bureaucratic requirements, which vary from country to country but share some common elements that must be understood and verified from the very beginning of the project.

1 Preliminary Regulatory Analysis

Il The first step is to research local regulations related to the production and sale of food, particularly regarding:

- ***Health permits for handling and selling fresh food products.***
- ***Commercial licenses specific to gelato production or foodservice activities.***
- ***Urban planning requirements and zoning regulations for the premises.***

It is advisable to consult local public authorities, chambers of commerce, health departments, and food industry consultants early on to avoid surprises later.

2 Business Registration

Anywhere in the world, a commercial activity must be registered with the relevant authority. The main steps include:

- ***Choosing the legal structure (sole proprietorship, company, franchise, etc.).***
- ***Opening a VAT number or obtaining a business tax ID.***
- ***Registering with the business register or its local equivalent.***

If operating in a shopping mall or airport, there may be additional restrictions and regulations to comply with.

3 Health and Safety Authorizations

An artisanal gelato shop is considered a full-fledged food laboratory. Therefore, it is essential to:

- ***Obtain health and safety authorization from the local control body (ASL, FDA, ANVISA, etc.).***
- ***Ensure that the lab complies with hygiene standards, food traceability, storage, ventilation, and waste disposal regulations.***
- ***Prepare an HACCP manual (or an equivalent food safety system) to manage microbiological and chemical risks.***

4 Professional Certifications and Training

Some countries require the owner or at least one responsible person to hold a food handling qualification. In some cases, technical training or a food operator license may also be mandatory.
For those aiming to work in highly regulated markets (such as the United States, Canada, or the UAE), it is important to check for any requirements regarding:

- ***Specific food safety certifications.***
- ***Courses approved by local health authorities.***
- ***Regular inspections and hygiene audits.***

5 Labeling, Allergen, and Communication Regulations

Labeling and customer communication must also comply with increasingly strict regulations:

- *Mandatory listing of ingredients, allergens, and the possible origin of ingredients.*
- *Rules on ingredient signs, nutritional statements, and labels such as "artisanal," "gluten-free," or "organic."*

In some countries, a single ingredient sign or an updated ingredient register accessible to customers and authorities is mandatory.

6 Tax and Customs Aspects (for Import-Export)

If importing ingredients, machinery, or semi-finished products from other countries, it is essential to:

- *Verify customs codes, duties, and import procedures.*
- *Comply with tax regulations on food purchases and sales, including VAT or equivalent taxes.*

However, it is advisable to work with local distributors of ingredient, machinery, and display case suppliers, who can manage all tax and customs procedures.

7 Insurance and Risk Management

Like any foodservice business, a gelato shop is exposed to various types of risk (hygiene-related, operational, legal). It is strongly recommended to

- *Take out liability insurance covering customers and employees.*
- *Consider specific coverage for equipment damage, product loss, contamination, and business interruption.*

CONCLUSION

Opening a gelato shop requires proper management of bureaucratic and health and safety aspects. It is essential to follow all legal requirements to avoid future problems. Although the bureaucratic process may seem complex, obtaining the necessary permits and correctly applying hygiene rules will ensure product safety and business success. Ensuring full compliance with all regulations is key to building a gelato shop that not only attracts customers but also operates professionally and lawfully.

SIGEP WORLD

THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE SHOW FOR ARTISAN GELATO AND PASTRY

Sigep World is the most important international trade fairs in the field of gelato, pastry, and the sweet culinary arts. Organized annually by **Italian Exhibition Group (IEG)**, it takes place in **Rimini** and is considered a benchmark for industry professionals, operators, and enthusiasts. With over 40 years of history, Sigep is the ideal stage to discover the latest innovations, technologies, trends, and ingredients in the world of artisan gelato and pastry.

The fair hosts a wide range of exhibitors showcasing equipment, ingredients, raw materials, and innovations, offering a unique opportunity to stay updated on the latest developments in the sector. Moreover, Sigep World is renowned for its competitions, workshops, and masterclasses led by experts, which allow participants to deepen their skills and discover new techniques.

Attending Sigep means connecting with market leaders, developing networking opportunities with professionals from around the world, and discovering the most advanced solutions to improve business quality. It is also a great opportunity to connect with potential customers and promote your brand internationally. With its extensive offerings, Sigep World is an unmissable event for anyone involved in the gelato, pastry, and horeca sectors.





GOOD LUCK WITH THE LAUNCH OF YOUR NEW BUSINESS!



A PASSION FOR WORK: A GUIDE TO OPENING A GELATO SHOP OR INTRODUCING ARTISANAL GELATO TO YOUR ESTABLISHMENT

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