



FSM Magazine

Combi Ovens Feature – September 2014

Please attribute any comments to Kris Brearley, Sales Director, RH Hall

Q. What ranges of combi ovens are available?

There are a range of combi ovens available on the market to suit most budgets, menu requirements, skill level and space restrictions. Ranging from combi's using steam (such as the Rational, Electrolux, Blue Seal and Lainox ranges of combi-steamers we stock) to those, like the Maestrowave Combi Chef 7, that works with microwave technology. A range of sizes are available to suit the smaller operation through to the higher volume requirements.

Combi-steamers are extremely versatile pieces of equipment, combining several cooking functions in one unit. Almost everything from roasting, baking, grilling, braising, poaching and steaming can be achieved. Using heat – either still or fan driven – and steam, which is injected into the oven as and when the food being cooked needs it, excellent results can be produced time after time. Most models are generally easy to operate once full training has been given.

Combination microwave ovens can handle almost every cooking requirement – from performing the simplest reheat/defrost tasks as a normal microwave, to conventional cooking methods with results produced in microwave speeds. Most operate from a single 13 amp supply and are easily operated with sophisticated results being possible within both skilled and non-skilled operations.

Q: What you should caterers consider before buying new equipment?

First and foremost you should look at choosing from a recognised brand – the major manufacturers are often the most innovative and have developed machines with intelligent features that are time/labour saving and energy efficient too. So, choose a leading brand with an established reputation – don't be tempted to go down the cheap import route.

To help make the right choice, caterers must be clear on the intended use: the volume of throughput; the types of dishes/menu available; variations in service time; staffing skills and find out about the latest features and operational functions before they invest.

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In some establishments the combi oven is used instead of a convection oven, therefore performance and reliability is key.

For a combination microwave oven, make sure you choose a machine with sufficient power. If the output is too low you can be frustrated by delays and if too high it will be difficult to judge timings of small portions and can lead to overcooking and wastage.

Also look for: accelerated cooking, regeneration and rapid defrost functions; rapid cool down facility, invaluable when needing to switch from oven or combination mode to defrost or microwave. Some latest models, like the Maestrowave Combi Chef 7, incorporate Menu Creation software for the ease of updating ever evolving food menus!

Whatever the choice of combi oven or cooker, caterers must carefully consider their purchase. Sturdy, commercial manufacture is a must, anything less won't perform or last! Also consider the availability of spare parts and after sales service, plus what length of warranty is available.

Space considerations

Space and installation aspects are also key considerations. It may seem fundamental, but consider the footprint of some ovens in comparison to their potential output.

The Combi Chef 7 has a small counter top footprint and can be stacked one on top of the other – so you can save on space yet double the output. Also many ovens will need hard wiring to a certain KW rating – with the Combi Chef 7 it's a simple case of plug in and go!

Q. What advantages do combi ovens provide?

Combination microwave ovens can handle almost every cooking requirement – from performing the simplest reheat/defrost tasks as a normal microwave, to conventional cooking methods with results produced in microwave speeds. Combi's can be operated manually or in some cases with unique pre-programme options which save valuable time in an operation and ensure food quality and consistency time after time.

Combination microwaves can be used as a stand alone appliance or alongside a microwave oven for greater efficiency and throughput – used in this way, makes regular menu changes possible, which keeps businesses abreast and even ahead of the latest menu trends and food styles.

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Multi- functional benefits

For example, the Maestrowave Combi Chef 7 has many features to offer including the latest Menu Creator 2.0™ software package, which allows you to ‘create your own menu’ and programme up to 99 menus using any method of oven, microwave, grill or combination and with or without the turbo fan! This oven is the most flexible, efficient and easy to use oven yet and will help you produce the best results ever, in super quick time – it’s really an oven that can do it all and produce consistent results time after time. Fits into a skilled or non-skilled kitchen with complete ease, this piece of equipment is very easy to operate with sophisticated results being possible within both operations.

Having ovens that can adapt to changing needs will help in terms of productivity and throughput, profits and cost savings too. Caterers can easily switch between one or two combi’s depending on demand, which will give great flexibility and potentially added profits when operating to full capacity, off-setting initial outlays.

Q. What features are the most useful on a combi?

With regards to key useful features when choosing a combi microwave, variable power is very important, as this will allow more dense food products to be reheated/cooked more evenly, working in the same way as a hob, it gives you exact control for a quality cooked/reheat result. A further feature to look for is stage cooking. This allows the operator to program in a series of different defrost/cook/reheat tasks to allow a complete process to be carried out at the press of a button. For example, it is possible to defrost then cook and keep warm ready for serve up all in one go. Most leading brand models now have this function as standard.

Q. How can chefs get the most from combi ovens?

Understanding is still the key to success with combination microwave cooking. To maximise usage of a combi effectively, I think it is paramount that all caterers are educated as to the full potential of their unit and also be receptive to implementing the alternative cooking techniques required and then they’ll be able to fully appreciate the great results that are possible and implement its use more and more in the meals produced by their kitchen. By fully understanding their combi microwave and getting the right techniques for each type of food, succulent meat, poultry and fish together with perfectly cooked vegetables that retain taste, texture and nutritive value are all possible.

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Q. What one tip would you offer someone who is buying/using a combi oven?

Choose a leading brand and buy the best equipment you can afford – take a close look at build quality don't be fooled into buying cheaper imports. Go for peace of mind - the leading brands, with an established and good reputation for quality, reliability and genuine service back up in a commercial situation is crucial.

For more information, please visit www.rhhall.com

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