



## Microwave Feature

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

The use of microwave ovens and technology is continuing to grow year on year! Once operators realise the value of having a microwave in their kitchen they reap the benefits, which are numerous, briefly they are:

Fast and incredibly efficient; they are the greenest cooking/reheating product available on the market; they are very, very affordable with an incredibly swift ROI.

Operationally, they work hand in hand with traditional equipment, but give operators the opportunity to extend menus, help cut queues and increase throughput, spend and revenue, from day one! Easily expandable and flexible, no bit of kit is so simple to implement!

RH Hall, together with food companies, development chefs and packaging companies have worked very hard over the years in developing food concepts that are absolutely perfect for microwave regeneration – by combining these, the food is now so good, you really wouldn't know the difference versus traditional cook methods – they've blind tested this!

RH Hall also has its own Bespoke Foodservice Solutions division and with their UK based fabrications factory it affords them the capability to make changes to standard microwave oven models and foodservice equipment to tailor it technically and cosmetically to suit a client's needs perfectly or to design and build bespoke products from scratch.

A great example of working with clients closely has resulted in an order for 300 commercial microwave ovens for a public sector client looking to install one microwave into each school within their local authority area as they can see the full benefit of bringing this equipment in to help with speed of service in light of the free school meals provision.

#### ***The value of microwave ovens***

They are essential for speed of service – considerably faster than conventional ovens and they also allow an operator to offer a wider choice of menu. Their versatility also provides advantages and the leading brands are developing models with new features and functionality in response to customers looking for product innovation, so they can be easily operated from a de-skilled base. Microwaves are very energy efficient too. In fact, when cooking vegetables they use three times less energy than that of a gas hob. Their footprint is also smaller than conventional ovens, great where space is at a premium.

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Today's microwave ovens are sophisticated, yet easy to use and produce excellent cooking results in a fraction of the time it takes to cook foods conventionally and their versatility is underestimated. Many foods and dishes can be cooked very, very well in a microwave oven: cakes, sauces, meat, fish, vegetables, fruit, pasta, rice, eggs and jams can all be cooked with great results – you can even roast a chicken in one, but you won't get a crispy, brown skin! However, a duck will cook well because of the amount of fat naturally found under the skin of the meat.

Meat and pastry products are often better cooked conventionally then re-heated in a microwave oven, but with the versatile combination microwave ovens available, these types of foods can be cooked with microwave technology with excellent results.

Microwave cooking uses the moisture found in the food itself.

Understanding is still the key to success with microwave cooking. To maximise usage of a microwave 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 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. Many of the techniques used in microwave cooking are the same as used in conventional cooking, but with a few minor adjustments.

There is a great deal of diversity of dishes that can be prepared quickly and easily from fresh ingredients. Not only that, but more nutrients are retained in microwave cooked food than by any other cooking method. In fact, correctly cooked vegetables contain 85% of their original vitamin content, when boiled they often contain none! A great benefit especially for growing children where they would only need to eat a little to get more of the vitamins they need.

Historically there has been a lot of negativity towards cooking with microwaves, but there shouldn't be, microwaves can cook great food in a fraction of the time it would take with other methods. Not only do they save time, but money and nutrients too.

Be prepared for a bit of trial and error! Overcooking is one of the common problems experienced when new to microwave cooking or introducing new dishes. It is better to undercook first until you are familiar with a recipe, test it and then increase the cooking time. You should also factor in standing time and test a dish after this – a bit of trial and error will help establish the correct timing for a perfect result. You can always put it back in the oven for an extra minute – whereas overheated or overcooked food is ruined.



Consider each of the foods you are cooking – every food has a different moisture, fat and sugar content and different starting temperatures – e.g. refrigerated, ambient etc. and these factors all affect cooking times and can affect the final result.

If unsure, always start with a recipe you are familiar with – if you have cooked it before you will know exactly what the finished dish should look and taste like, so you can then compare and tweak the cooking procedure to get the same result.

### Alternative microwave applications...

### The revolutionary *iWave*® Plated Meals System

Meal delivery can be dramatically improved whilst cutting food wastage and energy costs with the unique, fully automated *iWave*® ‘straight to plate’ foodservice solution. Suitable for chilled, frozen and ambient foods, it’s very economical to run with an eco-friendly carbon footprint, providing a saving of up to 70% over conventional foodservice methods.



With this system, catering operations are able to provide customers with a choice of good quality, nutritious hot meals that can be served within five minutes of selection.

The *iWave*® is extremely easy to use - manual controls have been replaced with a “fool-proof” barcode scanner and unique encrypted barcodes on dishes, with any chance of operator error being removed; every meal is delivered on demand, on time and at its best, every time. And because the food is not handled, it creates a very hygienic operation. Any foodservice volume demand can be accommodated.

The *iWave*® system also features a stock control system and this can replace much of the manual intervention currently required to re-order stock. The added benefits of waste and stock loss reporting will give management early warning of slow moving lines and potential misappropriation of stock.

Every time one of the unique *iWave*® barcodes are scanned, the identity of the food or user is recognised and logged by the system. The information is sent to the *iWave*® server via a wired, GPRS or wireless connection. Alternatively information can be stored on the *iWave*® and downloaded directly to a laptop or PDA with an infra-red or Bluetooth connection.

The use of the full e-reporting capabilities of the *iWave*® are optional. The system will work as a simple scan and cook unit if preferred. Other reporting needs can also be provided for on a bespoke basis.

***iWave*® System highlights:**

- Suitable for fresh, frozen and ambient food products
- 100% error proof with consistent and safe food regeneration
- Operates off a standard 13 amp plug, small footprint ideal for restricted space
- Very economical to run with an eco-friendly carbon footprint providing a saving of up to 70% over conventional food service regeneration
- Up to 50% capital cost saving compared to traditional regeneration equipment
- Full management reporting, automated stock control, HACCP
- Ability to fix the required food margin and control budgets

For more information:

[www.rhhall.com](http://www.rhhall.com)

[www.microwaveassociation.org.uk](http://www.microwaveassociation.org.uk)

[www.maestrowave.com](http://www.maestrowave.com)



FOR FURTHER PRESS INFORMATION CONTACT: LINDA STONE, MEDIA MONKEY TEL: 07880 734326 OR EMAIL: [lindastone2010@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:lindastone2010@hotmail.co.uk)