



## **Counters & Food Displays Feature**

### **EDUcatering – November 2014**

***Please attribute any quotes from the information below to Ray Hall, Managing Director, RH Hall***

- ***What range of counters and food displays are available for schools?***

There are solutions for every need, from slimline units, to freestanding serve over counters and upright glass door refrigerated units and smaller countertop heated displays - but above all with food display, style and looks are of paramount importance to maximise the appeal.

- ***Are there essentials that school caterers must have?***

In my opinion, schools will need to look at all of the operational functions that commercial counter and food display units have to offer, like any other professional foodservice provider – however you could argue even more so where children's health and safety are involved. Features such as easy to clean exteriors and interiors are vital, visible temperature display for HACCP monitoring, rapid cooling and self-closing doors to ensure optimum performance levels and forced air control systems to ensure uniformed temperatures and condensation prevention as this will ruin visibility and deter choice. In addition, heated units need to offer good heat distribution and a humidifying feature to prevent foods drying out. All the features embodied into units nowadays play a key role in ensuring they perform at their optimum to help ensure operators can comply with the food safety guidelines and those are essentials for any school catering operation.

- ***What difference do they make to pupils choosing their meals? Can a good display help improve the dining experience?***

Creative display and merchandising of food/meals can definitely enhance and increase appeal to children, especially if you want to encourage children to choose the healthiest options, showing them in a creative – maybe even themed displays, can help pupils make right choices. Wrongly presented and it can have the opposite effect! A good counter or display can ensure that foods are kept at their optimum serving conditions too, keeping them looking at their best – either at specific serving times (e.g. lunchtime) or throughout the day, hour after hour. Good internal lighting will also help to catch children's eyes and enhance the food display – bringing dishes more to life with added vibrancy. (Do check though that the lights won't overheat the foods in refrigerated displays). Some models have been further enhanced features, including glazed cabinet ends which offer even more product visibility. Cabinets also allow the opportunity for children to get closer to the foods without the risk of contamination from touching fingers or coughs and sneezes!

- ***What should caterers consider before buying new equipment?***

Schools need to consider whether the inclusion of counters and food display cabinets in their lunchtime offering will be of real benefit to the service – especially in terms of pupil throughput and lunchtime turnaround. The number and age of pupils is also a consideration – will having the cabinets cause a degree of delay and confusion with children of a younger age? Safety is also a consideration – can products be safely reached if looking at self-service options? Cont'd ...



PAGE 2

Also schools need to consider their type of operation and the foods/menu items suitable for display and think about future needs too as well as present. Will closed back-service display cabinets suit better than self-service options? Also, how will these options fit in with any existing servery/counters?

• ***What one tip would you offer school caterers buying a new counter or display?***

Out of the vast array of manufacturers and models available in this category, choose a leading brand with an established reputation for good quality and reliability. This way you will ensure compliance with all the relevant food safety regulations and be sure of the availability of spare parts and an efficient after sales service, keeping any down time to an absolute minimum. Try to buy the best unit that funds will allow and to provide for extra capacity for future peaks.

• ***Please include any other comments that you feel our readers will be interested in.***

Simple low cost maintenance is the key to keeping cabinets in good working order – cleaning both internally and externally on a daily basis after service is a must to prevent harmful bacteria building up. That and regular 6 monthly servicing will keep units in peak condition and ensure they operate to optimum efficiency.

RH Hall is the largest independent catering equipment supplier in the UK and with 35 years' experience in the industry we are ideally placed to offer completely independent expert advice to schools on the best foodservice equipment solutions available. We can supply solutions nationally via our extensive network of approved distributors or direct via our national account and public sector divisions.

We can offer a complete off the shelf tabling and counter system via our exclusive distributorship of the Simply Stainless range of tabling and counters, in addition, we also have our own Fabrications business, so we can offer bespoke products from scratch, tailor making a solution to an individual client's needs. All this expertise is backed up by excellent after sales and service capabilities.

• ***Please include a definitive website address where readers can go for more info on your company.***

Please visit [www.rhhall.com](http://www.rhhall.com) for more information.

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