



REFRIGERATION FEATURE

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Please attribute any comments to Ray Hall, Managing Director, RH Hall

Refrigeration really is the workhorse in any operation and it's no exception with garden centre catering – what other piece of equipment has to work at maximum efficiency 24/7? It is also at the forefront of minimising the risk of food poisoning, playing a vital role in maintaining the safety of food in optimum storage conditions.

It is vital to choose the correct equipment for your operation...

Optimum performance is guaranteed by the revolutionary new model ranges which combine innovative technology and environmentally friendly power systems to deliver outstanding energy efficiency and the bonus of long term cost savings – something that garden centre caterers working to tight budgets should be aware of. These models will pay for themselves in terms of energy savings very quickly.

Garden Centre caterers should also consider their operation and the required application of refrigeration – will it be used in the kitchen area or out front of house as counter display?

For the kitchen and storing food, caterers should consider the mix of fresh, chilled and frozen food they serve and the volume of meals being prepared. Throughput will help to identify the capacity and power of the unit required. But they should be mindful of any future plans for expansion or change in operation. Walk-in coldrooms and freezer rooms can be easier if there is space when storage volumes are high or variable (as with the busier summer months on courses) and smaller reach-in and step-in models are good for smaller turnover or where space is at a premium.

Garden centre operations should also consider whether the inclusion of refrigerated counters and food display cabinets in their front of house will be of real benefit to the service – especially in terms of visitor throughput and lunchtime turnaround. When looking at front of house refrigeration, good looks and efficiency are key, whether it is for food or drink counter displays – that all important first impression matters to attract visitors and increase their customer satisfaction to retain them in the garden centre and purchase food and drink – creative and dramatic displays are now possible with the range of refrigerated merchandising units available on the market. Consider here whether customers will be serving themselves from a refrigerated unit or whether staff will be serving refrigerated foods – for example chilled cakes and/or salads etc.

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

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Reliability and durability are a consideration – choose a leading brand with an established reputation for good quality and reliability. Look for energy efficient models to maximise performance and help reduce costs. A full manufacturer's warranty, spare parts availability and good after sales service are vital to avoid any unnecessary downtime.

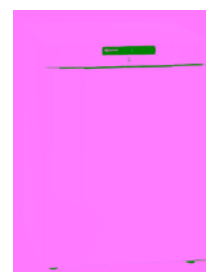
Operational features should be considered carefully, not all models have the same! So for comparison, consider things like visible temperature displays; rapid cooling; self-closing doors; adjustable and removable shelving; coved internal corners, removable door gaskets; forced/blown air to ensure uniformed temperatures; castors for moving units to allow ease of cleaning and possible re-location –all the features that make cleaning and operating the equipment easier.

We recommend that you buy the best refrigeration equipment that you can afford and bear in mind the CO² emissions – the lower the carbon footprint the more efficient and environmentally friendly. Don't be tempted to go down the cheap import route – these cabinets won't stand up to the strains put on this type of equipment and importantly the aftersales back-up won't be available or at best hard to expedite. A full manufacturer's warranty (which range from 1-5 years), spare parts availability and good after sales service are vital to avoid any unnecessary downtime and food wastage. The warranties from the leading manufacturers are definitely worth having and should play a fundamental part in equipment choice.

We can also advise on the savings available through manufacturers registered with the ECA (Enhanced Capital Allowance) Scheme which provides tax relief for businesses that invest in energy efficient equipment and with The Carbon Trust where there is an Energy Technology List which details products that offer better energy efficiency and reduced running costs.

RH Hall stock and supply various leading refrigeration brands within their extensive product range – including True, Electrolux, Lec, Gram, Williams, Celltherm cold and freezer rooms and imc back bar refrigeration.

For further information visit www.rhhall.com



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