



Pub & Bar Magazine

Kitchen Equipment Feature

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Please attribute any quotes to Ray Hall, Managing Director, RH Hall Ltd

Q. What are the most essential pieces of kitchen equipment for any pub serving food? What added extras can bring something more to a pub's offering?

It really can be a mine field to decide what equipment to choose out of the hundreds of brands and variations of equipment that are available on the market today. It really depends on the size and type of operation, the covers, the menu and staffing levels/skill basis.

For versatility and speed of service, Microwaves are a definite essential piece of equipment for any pub kitchen. In today's commercial kitchens, they have become a vital piece of equipment – primarily useful for the defrosting and rapid reheating of pre-cooked foods, aiding speed of service. But their abilities can go way beyond that. The efficiency and versatility of models currently available on the market can really allow publicans to offer a wider choice of menu. But likewise, where skills maybe limited, say at certain times during the day or if a pub has more emphasis on wet sales and a limited menu, then the simplicity of using a microwave to rapidly defrost and/or re-heat dishes can come to the fore. Great results can be achieved within both skilled and non-skilled outlets with this essential piece of equipment.

Other added extras such as Panini Grills can enable publicans to offer a very popular and 'on trend' hot freshly cooked snack in no time at all from a very low skills base. The profit margins on such dishes are excellent, with payback on the equipment in no time at all. Plus again, such equipment can be used at any time of the day, not only helping to offer dishes out of usual kitchen hours or to help spread the load of a busy kitchen, with less skilled staff being able to prepare and cook them, possibly in a secondary kitchen area or purely grill on a suitable back bar area Panini's that have been pre-prepared.

Q. What should operators look for when purchasing kitchen equipment ... quality, energy consumption, size and kitchen layout?

Many cheaper imports are flooding into the UK and it can be tempting to go down this route, but unknowingly to many, a lot of this equipment doesn't have any product conformity standards and the back-up of a full warranty. So when purchasing, I would recommend operators to go for a well-known brand - guaranteed quality doesn't cost you more!

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Regardless of size or duty, sturdy manufacture is a 'must' and this is what you get by choosing a well-known brand - anything else won't perform or last. Choose a leading brand with an established reputation for good quality, durability and reliability. These brands usually build in great operational features too, which should always be considered.

Equipment that is multi-functional and versatile is ideal and where space is at a premium, units with a small footprint can help save valuable space – as can those that can stack, one on top of the other.

With microwaves in particular, it is essential to choose a commercial model and not fall into the trap of purchasing a domestic microwave - they simply will not stand up to the rigours of the job. It is also important to get the right commercial model for the right throughput - that is number of covers and the type of cooking tasks it will need to perform. Equally important is the correct choice of microwave oven wattage. You need to choose an oven with sufficient power, but just as important is not to over specify. If it's too low, you can be frustrated by delays and if it's too high, it will be difficult to judge the timings of small portions.

The wattage determines the speed of reheat/cook times. Genuine commercial microwave ovens start at 1000 watts and go up to 3200 watts. The most popular outputs are 1000, 1200, 1500 and 1900 watts as these sizes can all be run from a standard 13amp socket and are generally fairly compact in size yet big enough internally to take a good-sized dinner plate/serving dish. The Sharp and Maestrowave ranges both have models to cover all outputs.

With regards to the types of cooking, if simple defrosting and reheating are the main requirements, then a straight commercial microwave will do the job well. However, if the need is to reheat and cook food products, then a microwave convection oven is your best choice. For example, pastry items, such as pies, will become soggy if reheated in an ordinary microwave whereas using a combination microwave convection oven, the pastry will be cooked a crisp golden brown but in microwave time!

A step on, the latest and most flexible combination microwave oven from Maestrowave (the new Combi Chef 7) is able to operate in a combination of modes and can bake, roast, grill, steam, defrost, regenerate, microwave, boil or simply keep food warm all in one flexible, efficient unit.

With regards to features, choosing a microwave with 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.

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Also, by using a microwave as opposed to other cooking methods, operators can reduce energy usage. Microwaves are very energy efficient, in fact, when cooking vegetables for example, they use three times less energy than that of a gas hob. In addition some vegetables retain up to 85% of their vitamin C content, compared to around 15% when boiled in a saucepan. So they are a very attractive option not only for energy savings but for nutritional benefits too. In addition with microwave use, the power is instantaneous, no need for lengthy energy using pre-heat times. Also as soon as a microwave is finished its process it powers off whereas a lot of ovens remain in standby mode when not in use, again using energy.

Q. How can operators maintain their equipment? Can staff training have an impact?

We recommend that the correct training of staff on how to use and look after the equipment in the first instance will definitely help with the maintenance and life span of any equipment. In addition, simple and regular low cost maintenance and cleaning will keep it in peak health and condition and very importantly will help avoid breakdowns at times when they least expect or need them.

Q. Are new technologies having an effect on kitchen equipment in the on-trade? Can you give any examples?

Indeed there are. Combination ovens have become a big hit as they provide a whole host of cooking options and features within a small footprint, whether this be a simple reheat process, steam, roast, bake, grill and with some combining microwave energy as well, provide lightning cook times but with a traditional cook appearance. Many combination ovens now have automatic cook technology and some even with self-cleaning! Rational and Maestrowave combination ovens are well worth a look at. For the smaller kitchens these innovative cookers can produce incredible menu serve throughput and will pay for themselves over a very short period.

Maestrowave's latest **Combi 7** has a unique **Menu Creator 2.0™** software package which allows the caterer to store up to 99 food menus of their very own choice. Then at a touch of a button the food can be cooked to perfection time after time and is 100% error proof. **iWave®** the world's only fully encrypted bar code microwave is also starting to gain good traction see below more information on this world's first bar code system with many 'e' bolt on services which provide the caterer reporting usage and will even store cooked foods temperatures - this has to be a hit with the EHO. Visit www.maestrowave.com for more information.

Modular stainless steel tabling wall shelves cupboards are now available with so many combinations and add-ons including chef drawers and the latest Simply Stainless range even provide a kitchen planner tool which is so easy to use. You simply enter the size of the intended kitchen area and drag and drop in the wish list of tables, sinks, cupboards, wall shelves and kitchen equipment and hey presto you have designed your very own kitchen! The kitchen planner will then provide you a same day quotation. Logon to www.simplystainless.com or the sole UK distributor RH Hall www.rhhall.com another world's first piece of innovation!



CASE STUDY

Innovation ready on a plate!

Culinaré Foods is a manufacturing company based out of a 35,000 sqft production facility in Lancashire and specialises in producing meal solutions within innovative packaging concepts. The product range concentrates on three key areas of sandwiches, hot eating snacks and more recently working with RH Hall, the innovative Torus Pak® packaging, Culinaré have launched the next generation of 'Straight to Plate' meal solutions.

A choice of 30 meals, including an 'all day' breakfast, traditional roast beef and Christmas dinner, have been created by Culinaré's development chefs, and the single portion meals are presented in the revolutionary Torus Pak® packaging system, which Culinaré are exclusive partners for in the UK. The packs feature a twin removable film, opening from the bottom so the chef's presentation once on the plate remains intact - maximising the attractiveness and appeal of each ready meal.

Peter Kitchener, the Sales and Marketing Director at Culinaré foods comments, "We have been working with Chris O'Neill and the team at RH Hall over the last few months developing the joint technology of both "Straight to Plate" and the iWave. As soon as we saw the iWave it was evident what benefits could be achieved in many sectors of the foodservice market. Seeing the ability to efficiently reheat our products from a very low skill base, ensuring that all of the necessary due diligence is taken care of automatically, we then knew we had to add the bar code technology to our "Straight to Plate" meals". The iWave system also keeps food wastage to a minimum, allowing for an 'on demand' meals service.

The new concept will fit a number of business environments and opportunities certainly exist to be developed within the pub sector. Orders for as little as 24 portions can be placed with Culinaré on a next day delivery basis.

This concept will be rolled out across Europe and Culinaré already have 30 iWaves in locations in the UK and Republic of Ireland. For more information: www.culinarefoods.com.

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