



MICROWAVES – TUCO AUGUST 2015

Please attribute any comments to Kris Brearley, Sales Director, R H Hall

How dependent are university caterers on their microwave?

Without a microwave, many basic reheating/defrosting tasks cannot be achieved and a kitchen may find that many cooking tasks take considerably longer than they are used to.

Microwaves 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.

What sort of dishes or accompaniments can be cooked in a microwave to save chefs time?

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.

There is a great 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.

Meat and pastry products are often better cooked conventionally than 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. It is likely that most caterers have a need for reheat, defrost and cooking tasks and in this case, it is recommended that both a combination microwave oven and a microwave oven be both purchased. A combination microwave oven will not replace the need for microwave oven and vice versa. These two types of oven work extremely well in tandem together. For example, whilst reheating /cooking pastry products using the combination model the ordinary microwave is available for all your straightforward reheat/defrost requirements. The features available today allow a choice of manual and programmable models and some even allow the chef to enter the detailed names of individual dishes and daily/weekly specials (as with the Maestrowave Combi Chef 7). As the name suggests, the Combi Chef 7 is able to operate in a variety and combination of modes making it the most flexible, efficient and easy to use oven yet! If the chef wants to bake, roast, grill, steam, defrost, regenerate, microwave, boil or simply keep food warm this is the oven that can do it all.

What new technologies are there within the microwave industry that caterers should look out for when buying new equipment?

Leading brands are developing models with new features and functionality in response to customers looking for product innovation. One key is not just the equipment itself, but in menu's and food products too – the marrying of equipment and food/menu developments to get the maximum quality, value for money and labour saving solutions. We have been working with leading food producers and packaging companies to develop dishes specifically for microwave regeneration.

The Maestrowave Combi Chef 7 features Menu Creator 2.0™ software. Packed with features, the oven will produce the best results at the simple touch of a button – a total combination of 11 cooking modes can be used to achieve top quality results. Up to 99 menus can be pre-programmed to ensure consistency time after time. But don't be daunted, the Menu Creator 2.0™ is extremely easy to use; however, if required, full technical support is available from RH Hall. There is a web video available on line which demonstrates the benefits of combination Microwave ovens - visit www.rhhall.com and follow the link on the home page.

What tips can you offer caterers on cooking food in their microwave?

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.

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.

Also when using your microwave on a regular basis, one tip that shouldn't be overlooked for getting the best from a microwave is regular cleaning - keep the oven's cavity and inner door clean of food spillage / deposits at all times. This will avoid cavity burn ups and prolong the life of its heart "The Magnetron". This measure will also help the consistency and speed of reheat/ cook times. You could purchase the **Microsave Cavity Protection System** which is a unique and simple plastic cavity liner which is safer to use, easier to clean and provides long term financial benefits. Every Sharp sold with the **Microsave CPS** comes with a lifetime warranty on the cavity.

For more information, please visit:

www.rhhall.com

www.microwaveassociation.org.uk

www.maestrowave.com

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