



NAFEM SHOW 2013

Leading National Foodservice equipment distributors R H Hall recently visited The NAFEM Show our in Orlando, Florida. Ray Hall reports back on his trip.

The North American Food Equipment Manufacturers (NAFEM) show is held once every two years and this year it was certainly larger than in 2011. It was busy, vibrant and the mood very positive-it would seem there is a good buzz back in the US foodservice market after 4 years of stagnation.

There were many new foodservice products and food themes on show with a continued emphasis on 'hi speed' cooking ovens combining Impinger technology and some with Microwave energy combined. We were very impressed with the new Ovention Impinger Pizza Oven which claims to cook a 12" pizza in less than 3 minutes. This product was developed by the inventor of Turbo Chef and looks to be a real winner (<http://www.ovationovens.com/>). Induction cooking equipment was much more available than 2 years ago - in fact within the 'What's Hot! What's Cool!®' section of the Innovation Zone there was an induction range cooker concept which operated on 12 volts!

Outdoor cooking continues to be big in the USA and we were pleased to link up with Crown Verity BBQ's and were shown further additions to their outstanding range of portable high quality BBQ grills including a very useful and stylish portable wash hand station which will be available in the UK from this spring. (Image available)

The US is renowned for its fast food dining chains but from the show it would appear there is a definite shift towards exploring new healthier fast food menu options from around the world. A good example of this is the Panera Bread chain. Their menu and portion sizes, in US terms, is pretty healthy and includes a choice of soup and half sandwich combos (with a wide choice of in-house baked breads) plus various other healthy options. For quick turnaround, they use the latest Electrolux Hi Speed Panini Grills (HSG) and a bank of Sharp Microwave ovens and soup dispensers for a truly fast 'on demand' and varied food service. Their outlets seem to be springing up all over the States - recognition of this moving trend.

(Menu available to use as an image)

The digital age and internet also played a big part at the show where apps for iPhone and android were being promoted in abundance. It would seem that the new age American is no longer content to just turn up and wait for a restaurant table they now want to book using a new quirky app which finds an available table at the nearest restaurant based on your chosen food type preference and your present location - yes they can track where you are! This kind of technology was also evident from most of the big name chains, where coupon deals and customer loyalty points are sent directly to your mobile if you are in close proximity of a participating outlet.

The inclusion of software driven touch screen control panels, interactive digital marketing and signage technology for example with on-screen menus was also prevalent amongst many leading foodservice brands, as was the attention to greener credentials and energy saving features-all different, dynamic and interesting to see.

All in all it was a very inspiring visit and we would very much recommend the trip to anyone in foodservice looking for fresh new ideas for themes, styles, equipment and of course checking out that good old American service (oh, and Disney of course!). The next show is in February 2015 (www.thenafemshow.org).

Have a nice day y'all!