



Microwave Feature

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

- ***How important is the microwave in a commercial kitchen? What are its main functions? What key benefits does it bring to a busy kitchen?***

The modern microwave oven in today's dynamic commercial kitchen has become a vital piece of equipment for defrosting and rapid reheating of pre-cooked foods. In fact, today's catering kitchen often has several in use to meet today's busy and fast demand for efficient menu serve and table turnaround.

The use of microwave ovens and technology is continuing to grow year on year! Once operators realise the value of having a microwave in their kitchen they reap the benefits, which are numerous, briefly they are:

- Fast and incredibly efficient; they are the greenest cooking/reheating product available on the market; they are very, very affordable with an incredibly swift ROI.
- Operationally, they work hand in hand with traditional equipment, but give operators the opportunity to extend menus, help cut queues and increase throughput, customer spend and revenue, from day one! Easily expandable and flexible, no other piece of equipment with this kind of capability is so simple to implement!
- Their footprint is also smaller than conventional ovens, great where space is at a premium.
- Cost wise, they are the most affordable and cost effective catering appliance on the market – really a must for any commercial kitchen, offering incredible value for money especially for top brands like Sharp, iWave® and Maestrowave with a return on investment in a matter of days.
- 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 under estimated. 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!



- 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
 - 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.
 - There is a great deal of 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!
- ***What are the key factors caterers should consider when purchasing a microwave?***

To choose the right kind of microwave, operators should look at what dishes they are producing and what you need the oven to do. If you require the microwave to be used mainly for the simple reheat and defrosting of foods then a straight **Commercial** microwave will suffice. However, if you wish to reheat and cook food products then a microwave convection oven is well advised. Items such as pastry will become soggy if reheated in an ordinary microwave whereas using a combination microwave convection oven the crisp golden brown and conventional finished result will be achieved however in microwave time!

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.

It is very important to choose the correct microwave oven wattage. You need to choose an oven with sufficient power, but just as importantly, do not over specify. If too low, you can be frustrated by delays, and if too high, it will be difficult to judge the timing of small portions.

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Whilst it is common for caterers to choose speed (the higher the output the faster reheat times), it is also very important to understand that for some food products too much speed will destroy smaller portions of food or the delicate and sugary types of products.

The higher output models (above 1900 watt) are designed for the reheating of larger portions of food and as the oven cavity sizes are much larger than the regular commercial microwave the requirement of more microwave output is vital to aid more even cook/reheat result.

If a caterer is looking to invest in new microwaves, they should also look at a microwave with variable power, as this will allow more dense food products to be reheated/cooked slower allowing for the conduction of heat to work through to the middle to avoid an overcooked outside and raw centre! The use of variable power works in the same way as your hob and gives you the exact control you need to create speed yet a quality cooked/reheat result.

A further feature to look for is stage cooking. This allows an 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.

It is very important to choose from a commercial range of microwaves, operators shouldn't be tempted to go down the domestic route – these units simply aren't built for the rigours of a professional kitchen. Likewise we would also recommend that cheap imports are also avoided – the testing, safety and product back-up that are offered by the leading brand names are often not available with a cheap import.

RH Hall only stock and supply microwaves from leading brands - ones that are proven, genuine commercial brands, including Sharp Professional microwave ovens and Maestrowave commercial microwave ovens, for both of whom they have been the sole UK distributors since 1992.

RH Hall offers the latest and most versatile range of microwaves and combination microwaves:

The market leading Sharp range of microwaves available through RH Hall offer heavy and extra heavy duty build quality with total control, flexibility and versatility –with in-built features to save time and energy. The best-selling range goes from 1500W to 1900W to cater for all foodservice applications. Prices range from

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, as these output sizes can all be run from a standard 13amp socket and are generally fairly compact in size yet big enough inside to accept a good-sized dinner plate.

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Designed with incredible flexibility in mind the **Sharp R1900M “Dual Control”** is a must for heavy-duty use. With its 1900 watt power this is a very fast microwave that has an “extra heavy duty build quality”, but still runs off a standard 13 amp plug, has two control panels and is capable of programming up to 100 of your favourite menus – ideal for de-skilled operations and speed of turnaround.

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**, which is able to operate in a variety and combination of modes making it the most flexible, efficient and easy to use oven yet!

It can bake, roast, grill, steam, defrost, regenerate, microwave, boil or simply keep food warm - this is the oven that can do it all. This high speed oven 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.

RH Hall also has its own Bespoke Foodservice Solutions division and with their UK based fabrications factory it affords them the capability to make changes to standard microwave oven models and foodservice equipment to tailor it technically and cosmetically to suit a client's needs perfectly or to design and build bespoke products from scratch.

- ***What price should an operator expect to pay?***

Price range is dependent on duty rating/wattage/throughput required – true commercial microwave ovens have got to be the most competitive and cost efficient catering item in the modern kitchen today!

You can buy the UK's no.1 brand very competitively. For a general guide to market pricing, a medium duty 1000W Sharp from £249.00 to £299.00 up to an extra heavy duty 1900W Sharp from £579.00 to £599.00.

- ***How often should an operator expect to replace a microwave?***

With annual servicing in place and from buying a recognised quality brand, there is absolutely no reason why your commercial microwave oven shouldn't last between 3-5 years and even more, dependent on site! And, on how the oven is cared for! Regular cleaning and servicing are key here.

- ***What kind of back-up should they be looking for from manufacturers?***

Caterers should look for a full service back-up in terms of on-site warranty and availability of spares from their manufacturer. Expect a least a year's warranty, some manufacturers offer 3 years. Genuine service back-up in a commercial situation is absolutely critical.



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FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT:

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