



EDUcatering – June 2015

Feature: School Catering Equipment

Please attribute any quotes on this information to Kris Brearley, Sales Director, R H Hall

When should caterers start thinking about buying new equipment ahead of the new academic year? When is the best time to carry out installations?

Caterers should ensure they have enough time to consider various quotations and equipment options before their required installation date. With so many options available it is crucial to take into account all areas of the food operation. Ideally, installations should take place outside of term time, provided access to the kitchen can be gained. This will avoid any interruption to busy service times.

What are the key pieces of catering equipment needed for schools?

The type of catering equipment a typical school requires is very much dependent on the size of operation, the covers and menu on offer. But generally, all kitchens require refrigeration, prime cooking and food preparation utensils. 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 units that can stack, one on top of the other.

One of the most popular pieces of equipment we sell because it offers speed of service, multi-functional and versatile, plus ideal where space is at a premium, is the Maestrowave Combi Chef 7 - this oven is able to operate in a veritable combination of modes – bake, roast, grill, steam, defrost, regenerate, microwave, boil or simply keep food warm – all of these stages of cooking can be pre-programmed into the unit under individual menu dishes and then caterers can quickly regenerate dishes in super quick time - this oven can do it all and is extremely easy to use, producing quality results in minutes.

What buying decisions should caterers make when looking at new school catering equipment?

The equipment options available to a caterer will largely depend on the volume of meals needed and the footprint that they have available. Kitchen design is crucial and can be the deciding factor between a normal and exceptional service. Energy efficiency should also be considered, as should the duty rating of the product and warranty offered. The cheapest equipment will not always be the best to suit the needs of a busy kitchen!

RH Hall's expertise goes beyond equipment supply... the company can advise on how to plan an effective kitchen and servery layout, within the space available, develop menus and help choose the most suitable equipment for the needs of the operation and all to a budget.

Has Universal Infant Free School Meals and other parts of the School Food Plan affected the way that caterers buy catering equipment?

With more and more children now taking school meals, caterers must ensure that their kitchens are capable of meeting demands at all times of the school year. Down-time on key pieces of equipment is not an option during term time, so the quality of equipment chosen and the service back up provided is of prime importance. Caterers must be mindful of this when choosing their equipment and ensure the right advice is available to them from their supplier.

What one tip would you offer caterers when buying new equipment?

Out of the vast array of manufacturers and models available in this category, choose a leading brand with an established reputation for good quality and reliability. This way you will ensure compliance with all the relevant food safety regulations and be sure of the availability of spare parts and an efficient after sales service, keeping any down time to an absolute minimum. Try to buy the best unit that funds will allow and to provide for extra capacity for future peaks.

Please include any other comments that you feel our readers will be interested in.

It is best to choose a company that is well established, reputable and one that can give independent, professional and unbiased advice. Also one that operates to acknowledged standards e.g. ISO accredited. Also with regards to purchasing within the education sector, caterers can be sure of their supplier's credentials through the ESPO buying agreement – RH Hall is an ESPO accredited supplier. All the financials, pricing, service have already been checked out at the tender stage, so caterers in the sector can buy with even greater confidence.

Website for further information:

For more information, please visit www.rhhall.com

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