



MICROWAVES FEATURE SLTN 24TH NOVEMBER 2016

Please attribute any comments to Ray Hall, Managing Director, R H Hall

What types of festive foods are microwaves particularly suited to?

Vegetables, gravies and sauces will all take particularly well to microwave cooking during the festive season, as well as many desserts – including Christmas Pudding! 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.

There are 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 then 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. There is a video showing all the features and benefits of the versatile Combi Chef 7 – visit www.rhhall.com to view.

Are there any checks businesses can carry out on their microwaves ahead of the festive season, to ensure they will hold up under the strain of December's heavy usage?

Users should check their festive menu and decide which cooking tasks will be handled in the microwave. Tests should be carried out in advance to ensure that the microwave being used has the correct wattage to produce the right results for the menu items in question.

Maintenance is also key and the oven should be regularly cleaned to reduce any chances of down-time over the busy festive season. Consider the age and past reliability of your machine – old or potentially faulty units may need to be considered for replacement.

Operators should check whether their current machines are still within the manufacturer warranty period and should ensure they have all relevant details to hand, should an urgent call out be required. Many suppliers will be operating during amended hours during the festive period and may even have a hotline dedicated to any service issues.

Are there any regular cleaning/maintenance routines operators/chefs should be carrying out to help protect their microwaves during the festive season?

When using your microwave on a regular basis, one thing 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 cavity liner manufactured from high quality TPX resin - which is safer to use, easier to clean and provides long term financial benefits. This invaluable add on is designed to work with the Sharp Commercial Microwave range and every Sharp sold with the Microsave CPS comes with a lifetime warranty on the cavity.

How important is it to have a warranty/service agreement in place ahead of the festive season?

Without a proper warranty or service agreement in place, operators leave themselves exposed to potentially high costs over the festive period. If a machine breaks down, the charge for an engineer call out could be much higher than normal. Also consider that there may not be full cover during this time and any delays could result in costly loss of business.

For those looking to replace their microwave/s ahead of the Christmas season, can you provide some top tips for choosing a new microwave?

To choose the right kind of microwave, consumers should look at their menu offering and decide what tasks the microwave oven should undertake. If the microwave is to be used mainly for simple reheating and defrosting of foods then a straight-forward commercial microwave will suffice. However, if you wish to reheat and cook food products then a combination microwave oven is well advised. Items such as pastry will become soggy if reheated in an ordinary microwave whereas using a combination microwave the crisp, golden brown and conventional finished result will be achieved in microwave time!

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

Always choose from a commercial range of microwaves, consumers 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. Always check the warranty offering available. A good quality commercial machine should come with a minimum of 1 year on site parts & labour warranty – with many of the leading manufacturers now offering up to 3 years.

For more information, please visit:

www.rhhall.com

www.microwaveassociation.org.uk

www.maestrowave.com

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