

EDUCATERING DECEMBER 2016 OVENS FEATURE



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What are the key considerations of buying a new oven?

Operators should consider their equipment needs in line with current and future menu requirements, numbers and times/peaks in service – for example, it may be that two smaller, versatile ovens that can adapt to changing service needs are better than investing in one large unit or that for example, one larger bake-off oven could cover a breakfast offering by itself and then bake-off products, such as baguettes, ready to be filled for the lunch service.

Space and installation aspects are also key considerations. Consider the footprint of some ovens in comparison to their potential output and whether products can be stacked, one on top of the other. Chefs can easily switch between one or two ovens depending on demand, which will give them great flexibility and potentially added profits when operating to full capacity, offsetting initial outlays. Alternatively a secondary smaller back-up oven such as the Smeg ALFA43UK could be installed to help cater for peaks – or a microwave added for speed. There are a huge range of options to suit and fulfil all needs, whilst remaining cost effective.

Do school caterers use their oven to their full potential?

Any catering operation can be guilty of not understanding the full potential of the equipment available to them. To help make the right choice, operators must be clear on the intended use of their oven. Look at the volume of throughput, the types of dishes/menu available, variations in service time, staffing skills and find out about the latest features and operational functions before they invest. Training is also essential to ensure that all staff are fully aware of the functions of the equipment.

What is the one essential piece of oven kit that schools should invest in?

An oven is a vital piece of equipment in any kitchen, whether it is part of a cooking range or a stand-alone model, it has to be a versatile and flexible workhorse able to make light work of the most demanding and varied dishes and be able to respond to the ongoing changing demands that come with any professional commercial kitchen. School kitchens need to have a varied and attractive food offering and an oven that can 'multi task' in response to that will be a good investment.

The Smeg ALFA Range of bake-off ovens provides an innovative and versatile solution. Savouries, breads and morning goods including the most delicate of products, like croissants, can be cooked to perfection, but what a lot of people don't realise is that the equipment's flexibility expands way beyond that – in fact, there is relatively little that these ovens can't cook! Another big plus is that they look good enough to be sited 'front of house' with the aroma of freshly baking food, helping to maximise sales.

Is it better to stick to one brand of oven throughout a kitchen or can caterers have a combination of brands?

The brand of oven used in a kitchen is really down to the preference of a chef and can be influenced by many factors – usually good (or equally bad!) previous experiences. If the caterer has no prior experience of ovens, then always carefully consider the equipment on offer and look for sturdy, commercial manufacture is a must, anything less won't perform or last! Choose a leading brand with an established reputation – don't be tempted to go down the cheap import route. Also consider the availability of spare parts and after sales service, plus what length of warranty is available.

What are the latest oven technologies?

Manufacturers are always looking for new ways to improve cooking performance – features such as twin reversing fans on many of the Smeg ALFA models ensure even cooking temperatures and impressive results, time and time again. Whilst preset controls are not a new technology, things are continually being improved to provide ease of use and menu programmes offer a solution where consistency is key.

Energy efficiency is fast becoming a key factor in many purchases. Many ovens will need hard wiring to a certain kW rating, but unique to Smeg is an adjustable kW rating on larger units. Operators can easily adjust the machine from 3kW to 8.3kW, dependent on the power supply available and the output required. Some units remain operational from a simple 13 amp plug, making the unit easy to install and keeping energy costs low

Website for further information:

For more information, please visit www.rhall.com

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