



## STOCKPOT JANUARY 2016 OVENS FEATURE

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In selecting the right oven for their kitchen, chefs need equipment that will adapt to the various requirements throughout the day and to future changes in menu and demand.

***How can they ensure they have a solution that will allow them to respond to such challenges?***

Chefs should consider their equipment needs in line with current and future menu requirements, numbers and times/peaks in service. Look at the flexibility of the equipment available and how it will work at differing service times. Having ovens that can adapt to these changing needs will help in terms of productivity/throughput, profits and in terms of cost savings too.

Performance, ease of operation/cleaning, space and installation aspects are also key considerations. It may seem fundamental, but consider the footprint of some ovens in comparison to their potential output. Look for products which are stackable to save space and also consider the door opening. For example the latest Smeg range offers a choice of drop down or side opening door versions.

***Does this mean buying more than one type of oven?***

This would depend on what product needs cooking/heating by way of an oven. It is however common for modern kitchens to use more than one oven type. It may be that two smaller, versatile ovens that can adapt to changing service needs are better than investing in one large unit. Alternatively, one larger oven could cover a breakfast offering by itself and then bake-off products, such as baguettes, ready to be filled for the lunch service. This decision really comes down to the budget / space available and the use of the oven/s during peak service times. The use of combi ovens is very popular and often a standard back up / 2<sup>nd</sup> table top oven is desired for additional demands or for a particular food menu product (s)

For example; Smeg offer a wide range of ovens - from compact 4 tray manual options, to large 10 tray fully programmable ovens. There are also choices between traditional bake off/fan ovens – with or without humidification – and multifunction ovens with grills.

***How does menu style influence the buying decision?***

Chefs should always ensure that the oven (s) they choose are suitable for such required menu items. Standard convection ovens are best suited to cooking bread and pastry products, but are also perfectly capable of cooking pizzas and cakes. There is relatively little that these ovens can't do, but if roasting meats or grilling is needed, it is far better to look at a multifunction oven which will combine all required features.

Preset and program functions should also be considered. If a menu is regularly changing, then standard manual controls may be best as the oven can be set as required for its tasks as required. However, if the oven regularly undertakes certain specific tasks or is regularly used by unskilled operators, an oven with preset capabilities will allow the same tasks to be performed over and over again at the simple touch of a button – with all timings and temperatures programmed in.

For e.g; Smeg have introduced 2 new models in 2015; The ALFA45UK is a traditional fan oven, perfect for baking and reheating a wide range of goods, whilst the ALFA45MFPGN adds a grill and humidification features for roasting. This model also includes a refractory stone base which is perfect for cooking pizza's! Both models accept 435x320mm trays and have a temperature range of 50-250°C.

***What practical advice can you give to help chefs get maximum operational benefit from their ovens?***

Buying from an established proven company that provides a commissioning and training service as it is vital that chefs fully understand all the features that their ovens have in order to use them to their full potential. Many chefs are fully versed in the capabilities of their equipment and have devised their menus and service offerings across the day in response to this.

R H Hall UKs' exclusive Smeg distributor offers such a service via their National dealer network and dedicated national account team.

An oven to look out for: The Smeg ALFA144XE1 has a proven track record of success and is already being used by some of the UK's leading operators. Recently selected as the winner of the Ranges & Ovens category at the 2015 Caterer Product Excellence Awards, this is one of the most technically advanced ovens on the market today, offering an innovative and versatile cooking solution.

Whatever the choice of oven, chefs must carefully consider their purchase. Sturdy, commercial manufacture is a must, anything less won't perform or last! Choose a leading brand with an established reputation – and 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. Buy from a reputable catering dealer!

***Website for further information:***

For more information, please visit [www.rhhall.com](http://www.rhhall.com)

**R H Hall are the Exclusive UK Distributor for the Smeg range of Foodservice Ovens**

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