



MICROWAVES FEATURE SLTN 16TH MARCH 2017

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

What benefits can the right microwave bring to an outlet's food operation?

The most obvious advantage of a microwave is speed of cooking, they are essential for speed of service – considerably faster than conventional ovens and they also allow an operator to offer a wider choice of menu. Microwaves are versatile, space saving (units can easily be stacked), have low running costs and are also extremely affordable. In comparison to the tasks they undertake, they provide great value for money.

What are some of the latest innovations in microwave technology? And what advantages therefore can newer models present to operators?

A subject of current discussion is the use of RF Solid State cooking technology, which provides far better and more consistent power control, along with many other benefits. The cost of this technology is currently very high, but we will see it introduced to the market in time.

Manufacturers are always looking for new and innovative ways that microwave technology can be used. The Combination Microwave market is continuing to grow – with these clever machines offering the speed of microwave cooking, combined with the versatility of more conventional methods. Many also include pre-programmable menu facilities, such as the Maestrowave Combi Chef 7 which includes Menu Creator 2.0™, allowing users to set up to 99 different menu settings and deploy these to as many machines as required via SD card – ensuring total consistency. We are currently seeing rapid progress with Combination Microwave technology and expect to see imminent changes in this area – we are currently working with some major manufacturers in developing the next generation!

The use of barcodes with microwave cooking continues to be exclusively marketed and developed by iWave. The company are currently planning an addition to the range which will be designed to appeal to the wider catering market. Keep an eye on www.maestrowave.com for the latest news.

What advice would you give to those unsure of when to replace their current microwave? Is there a certain time period licensees should follow, or does it vary based on how it's maintained? What are the classic telltale signs that a microwave is nearing the end of its usable life?

The expected lifespan of a commercial microwave oven is around 5 years, provided it is well maintained and cared for during use. 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, a unique and simple cavity liner - which is safe to use, easy 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.

When replacing or upgrading to a new unit, what should an operator's priorities be?

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.

In your view, how important is ease of use? And what benefits can a straightforward unit bring to an outlet's kitchen?

Models with manual controls are incredibly straight forward to use and offer an out of the box solution for unskilled kitchen staff. However, these models can sometimes lack the advanced features that have become available in recent years. A touchpad, programmable model may seem daunting at first glance, but provided this is set up correctly from the start it can actually be the most straight forward option. With the correct programme settings, a touchpad machine will ensure consistent results and help to prevent user error.

Lastly, what kind of back up should operators expect from manufacturers?

The right supplier should be able to assist an operator in selecting the right model for their requirements, depending on predicted usage and the menu to be offered. Training should also be available if needed, as well as the potential for food trials and testing for larger operators and chains. In addition, operators should check that their supplier is able to offer them reliable service back up, perhaps also offering maintenance contracts if required – and has good availability of any spare parts required, with stock held for fast delivery.

For more information, please visit:

www.rhhall.com

www.microwaveassociation.org.uk

www.maestrowave.com

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