

MICROWAVE FEATURE SLTN MAY 2021



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How broad a role can microwaves play in commercial kitchens? How is the role of the commercial microwave likely to have changed as the trade reopens following lockdown?

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, with great results. The most obvious benefit to any operator is speed, but there is a great deal of versatility that a microwave can offer. Used properly, the microwave will form a key part of the kitchen operation and the ability to serve a full menu. Whilst the role of a microwave in the commercial kitchen is not likely to change following lockdown, many operators may find themselves wanting to expand their menus or improve turnaround times and microwaves will certainly play a key role in this, particularly where budgets are limited. Combination microwaves can be used in place of a grill or oven where space is limited, combining these traditional cooking methods with microwave speed for outstanding results – even when cooking foods such as pastries, pies and pizza. 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. As well as traditional regeneration, microwaves can also be used for steaming vegetables and sauces or gravies. For operations looking to introduce a simple food offering, the right microwave can help them create a 'kitchen in a box' with a small footprint and a minimal budget.

What sort of dishes can be prepared and cooked using a microwave and what is the advantage in this?

To choose the right kind of microwave, operators 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.

What factors should operators consider when purchasing a new commercial microwave?

Always choose from a commercial range of microwaves, operators 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. Look particularly at the cover offered on the magnetron, which is the heart of any commercial microwave! Our knowledgeable team can assist an operator in selecting the right model for their requirements, depending on predicted usage and the menu to be offered. Training is also available if needed, as well as the potential for food trials and testing for larger operators and chains. In addition, we offer operators reliable service back up via our dedicated Customer Service team and nationwide network of service agents. We can also offer maintenance contracts if required – and have good availability of all spare parts, with stock held for fast delivery.

What sort of lifespan should licensees and restaurateurs expect to see from their microwaves and how can this be prolonged? What warranties and support should operators look for from suppliers?

With annual servicing in place and by buying a recognised quality brand, there is absolutely no reason why your commercial microwave oven shouldn't last between 3-5 years and even more, dependent on site and on how the oven is cared for! Regular cleaning and servicing are key to ensure users get the maximum lifespan from their microwave. When using your microwave on a regular basis, one tip 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 plastic cavity liner which is safer to use, easier to clean and provides long term financial benefits. Designed for the extra heavy duty Sharp range, every model sold with the Microsave CPS comes with a lifetime warranty on the cavity.

Any other tips or advice for pub and bar operators on the benefits of a commercial microwave and how to get the most from the equipment?

One of the latest developments in the commercial microwave oven market is the use of Inverter technology to provide outstanding cooking results. Inverter technology differs from traditional microwaves by providing constant, rather than pulsed, power when cooking, reheating or defrosting at reduced power levels. For example, a traditional microwave set at 50% will pulse by switching power on and off throughout the cooking period, which can lead to uneven results in some foods. Inverter technology will provide a precise and constant supply of power at 50%, making it easier to cook or reheat foods slowly and defrost dishes to perfection. Thanks to precise temperature control, you can cook, reheat or defrost a far greater variety of dishes that conventional microwaves were previously not able to prepare to the same high standard. Our team can advise further on the results available from inverter technology.

R H Hall are the Sole UK and Eire Distributor for the Sharp range of Professional Microwave Ovens and Sole Worldwide Distributor for the Maestrowave range of Catering Equipment.

For more information:

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