



## SCHOOL CATERING EQUIPMENT EDUCATERING JUNE 2016

*Please attributes any quotes to Kris Brearley, Sales Director, R H Hall*

### **What key pieces of catering equipment are needed for a school kitchen?**

The type of catering equipment a typical school requires is very much dependent on the size of operation, the covers and menu on offer. But generally, all kitchens require refrigeration, prime cooking and food preparation equipment. Items that are multi-functional and versatile are ideal and where space is at a premium, units with a small footprint can help save valuable space – as can units that are stackable.

One of the most popular pieces of equipment we sell offers speed of service, is multi-functional and versatile, and perfect where space is at a premium. The Maestrowave Combi Chef 7 is able to operate in a wide combination of modes – bake, roast, grill, steam, defrost, regenerate, microwave, boil or simply keep food warm – all of these stages of cooking can be pre-programmed into the unit under individual menu dishes and then caterers can quickly regenerate dishes in super quick time - this oven can do it all and is extremely easy to use, producing quality results in minutes. There is a video showing all the features and benefits of this model – visit [www.rhhall.com](http://www.rhhall.com) and follow the links from the home page, or subscribe to our You Tube channel.

### **What considerations to caterers need to take when purchasing catering equipment? Eg space, energy consumption etc.**

The equipment options available to a caterer will largely depend on the volume of meals needed and the footprint that they have available. Kitchen design is crucial and can be the deciding factor between a normal and exceptional service. Energy efficiency should also be considered, as should they duty rating of the product and warranty offered. The cheapest equipment will not always be the best to suit the needs of a busy kitchen!

R H Hall's expertise goes beyond equipment supply... the company can advise on how to plan an effective kitchen and servery layout, within the space available, develop menus and help choose the most suitable equipment for the needs of the operation and all to a budget.

### **What one tip would you offer caterers on purchasing and using catering equipment?**

Out of the vast array of manufacturers and models available in this category, choose a leading brand with an established reputation for good quality and reliability. This way you will ensure compliance with all the relevant food safety regulations and be sure of the availability of spare parts and an efficient after sales service, keeping any down time to an absolute minimum. Try to buy the best unit that funds will allow and to provide for extra capacity for future peaks.

### **Does a school's catering equipment needs depend on the menu it produces?**

Absolutely – but the right selection of equipment should easily cope with a regularly changing menu. The main consideration is which pieces of equipment will bear the heaviest loads – these should be where investment is maximised and the functionality of the equipment carefully scrutinised.

### **Should caterers expect their catering equipment to last for a long time?**

If specified correctly for the tasks it will under-take and correctly cared for, commercial equipment should provide years of use for any kitchen. Caterers should always ensure they are purchasing a genuinely commercial model and carefully check all specification to make sure the equipment can handle the tasks required of it.

Equipment should be regularly cleaned and any recommended maintenance tasks carried out at specified intervals. R H Hall can provide maintenance contracts where needed, ensuring regular checks and maximising the longevity of any equipment.

### **How useful is it for school caterers to have a microwave in their kitchen?**

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. Their versatility also provides advantages and the leading brands are developing models with new features and functionality in response to customers looking for product innovation, so they can be easily operated from a de-skilled base. Their footprint is also smaller than conventional ovens, great where space is at a premium.

### **How much of a menu can be cooked using a microwave?**

Many things can be successfully cooked with a microwave, but be prepared for a bit of trial and error! Overcooking is one of the common problems experienced when new to microwave cooking or introducing new dishes. It is better to undercook first until you are familiar with a recipe, test it and then increase the cooking time. You should also factor in standing time and test a dish after this – this process will help establish the correct timing for a perfect result. You can always put it back in the oven for an extra minute – whereas overheated or overcooked food is ruined. Consider each of the foods you are cooking – every food has a different moisture, fat and sugar content and different starting temperatures – e.g. refrigerated, ambient etc. These factors all affect cooking times and the final result.

### **What new technologies are there in the microwaves market?**

Leading brands are always looking to develop new functionality in response to the needs of many consumers. The Maestrowave iWave® system is a prime example of this development. Using the latest microwave technology, the system provides a unique, fully encrypted, bar coded meal solution which is suitable for a number of applications. Each menu item has an associated barcode containing the specific cooking times and full menu data for each menu item, reducing any chance of human error. The latest version also has a temperature probe option to ensure that the food is always cooked / reheated to the required temperature. This information can also be logged and reported via the internet. The product is a world first, and available exclusively through R H Hall.

### **Are modern microwaves more energy efficient?**

Modern microwaves are very energy efficient. In fact, when cooking vegetables they use three times less energy than that of a gas hob. Most commercial models operate from a single 13amp plug.

### **What maintenance issues around microwaves do caterers need to be aware of?**

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. Every Sharp sold with the Microsave CPS comes with a lifetime warranty on the cavity.

### **What ovens are essential to any school kitchen?**

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 have one large oven or multiple ovens that can be switched off when not in use?**

If ovens will be taking on many of a school kitchens key tasks, it is always sensible to have back up available should the worst happen and the main oven goes down before or during service. Smeg offer a wide range of ovens from 4 tray compact, to 10 tray gastronorm. The ALFA43UK is one of the UK's best selling models and available at very competitive prices.

### **Are there any new oven technologies caterers should look out for?**

Equipment is becoming more intelligent, with programmable models aiding efficiency and ensuring consistent results, leading to less wastage. In addition, features such as rapid pre-heat functions save on power and aid unit recovery after loading/unloading; self-diagnostic facilities are built-in to some equipment which can detect any operational problems, again helping to keep them running at optimum performance and efficiency and auto power cut out is a great feature which saves energy when the equipment is not in use.

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.

New for 2016, the ALFA140UK is perfect for baking/reheating and designed to accept 4x 1/1 GN containers (or 600x400mm trays). This model also features a 50-250°C temperature range and 60 minute timer, plus a double glazed door and stainless steel interior. Suitable for use with a standard 13 amp plug, this model can simply be unboxed and plugged in, so is ready to use in minutes! The ALFA140UK leads the way for a brand new range of Smeg ovens due in 2016 - enhancing the existing best selling Oven range with additional Multifunction and Combination options, all featuring a new innovative control system.

**Please include a definitive website address where readers can go for more info on your company.**

[www.rhhall.com](http://www.rhhall.com)

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