



COMBI OVENS FEATURE CASUAL DINING – JULY 2015

Please attributes any quotes to Ray Hall, Managing Director, RH Hall

- ***How essential are combi ovens to school kitchens?***

In a school kitchen time - and often space – are of the essence. Combination ovens can handle almost every cooking requirement – from performing the simplest reheat/defrost tasks as a normal microwave, to conventional cooking methods with results produced in microwave speeds. Combi's can be operated manually or in some cases with unique pre-programme options which save valuable time in an operation and ensure food quality and consistency time after time.

- ***What sort of dishes can school caterers create with a combi oven? Does it require a certain skill level?***

Modern combi ovens can cook a multitude of dishes, combining speed and high quality results. Even items such as pastry, which you would not necessarily utilise a microwave for, can have outstanding results when using the combination of microwave and convection.

Getting the correct training for staff on how to use and look after the equipment in the first instance will definitely help a caterer get the best from an oven or range. With the Maestrowave Combi Chef 7, the menus are easily pre-programmed and then operation is extremely easy, even from a completely de-skilled staff base.

Understanding is still the key to success with combination microwave cooking though. To maximise usage of a combi effectively, I think it is paramount that all caterers are educated as to the full potential of their unit and also be receptive to implementing the alternative cooking techniques required and then they'll be able to fully appreciate the great results that are possible and implement its use more and more in the meals produced by their kitchen. By fully understanding their combi microwave and getting the right techniques for each type of food, succulent meat, poultry and fish together with perfectly cooked vegetables that retain taste, texture and nutritive value are all possible.

- ***What buying considerations should schools take when looking at a new combi?***

First and foremost you should look at choosing from a recognised brand – the major manufacturers are often the most innovative and have developed machines with intelligent features that are time/labour saving and energy efficient too. So, choose a leading brand with an established reputation – don't be tempted to go down the cheap import route.

To help make the right choice, caterers must be clear on the intended use: 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.

Having ovens that can adapt to changing needs will help in terms of productivity and throughput, profits and cost savings too. Caterers can easily switch between one or two

combi's depending on demand, which will give great flexibility and potentially added profits when operating to full capacity, off-setting initial outlays.

With regards to features when choosing a microwave/combi microwave, variable power is very important, as this will allow more dense food products to be reheated/cooked more evenly, working in the same way as a hob, it gives you exact control for a quality cooked/reheat result. A further feature to look for is stage cooking. This allows the operator to program in a series of different defrost/cook/reheat tasks to allow a complete process to be carried out at the press of a button. For example, it is possible to defrost then cook and keep warm ready for serve up all in one go. Most leading brand models now have this function as standard.

For a combination microwave oven, make sure you choose a machine with sufficient power. If the output is too low you can be frustrated by delays and if too high it will be difficult to judge timings of small portions and can lead to overcooking and wastage.

Also look for: accelerated cooking, regeneration and rapid defrost functions; rapid cool down facility, invaluable when needing to switch from oven or combination mode to defrost or microwave. Some latest models, like the Maestrowave Combi Chef 7, incorporate Menu Creation software for the ease of updating ever evolving food menus!

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. The Combi Chef 7 has a small counter top footprint and can be stacked one on top of the other – so you can save on space yet double the output. Also many ovens will need hard wiring to a certain KW rating – with the Combi Chef 7 it's a simple case of plug in and go!

- ***Are there any new technologies or features in the combi oven market that school 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.

Combi's can be operated manually or as we have seen in the past few years, unique pre-programme options have been developed which save valuable time in an operation and ensure food quality and consistency time after time.

Multi-functional benefits have come to the fore in the past few years – for example: The Maestrowave Combi Chef 7 has many features to offer including the latest Menu Creator 2.0™ software package, which allows you to 'create your own menu' and programme up to 99 menus using any method of oven, microwave, grill or combination and with or without the turbo fan! This oven is the most flexible, efficient and easy to use oven yet and will help you produce the best results ever, in super quick time – it's really an oven that can do it all and produce consistent results time after time. Fits into a skilled or non-skilled kitchen with complete ease, this piece of equipment is very easy to operate with sophisticated results being possible within both operations. The model sits on a counter and operates from a single 13 amp supply.

We have produced a brand new video showing all the features and benefits of combi cooking using the latest and innovative Maestrowave Combi Chef 7. Simply log on to www.rhahall.com and follow the links from the home page.

- ***What one tip would you offer schools on buying a new combi oven?***

Choose a leading brand and buy the best equipment you can afford – take a close look at build quality don't be fooled into buying cheaper imports. Go for peace of mind - the leading brands, with an established and good reputation for quality, reliability and genuine service back up in a commercial situation is crucial.

- ***Please include any other comments that you feel our readers will be interested in.***

- We stock 100+ quality brands and over 10,000 best selling products. We are also looked to for support from organisations such as the Craft Guild of Chefs and MTA.
- It is best to choose a company that is well established, reputable and one that can give independent, professional and unbiased advice. Also one that operates to acknowledged standards e.g. ISO accredited. Also with regards to purchasing within the education sector, caterers can be sure of their supplier's credentials through the ESPO buying agreement – RH Hall is an ESPO accredited supplier. All the financials, pricing, service have already been checked out at the tender stage, so caterers in the sector can buy with even greater confidence.
- RH Hall's Foodservice Solutions offer bespoke and tailored solutions for any foodservice brand, concept, menu or operational need. University caterers can tap into our successful creative foodservice solutions that have been developed already with a number of major foodservice chains and operators, including ready-made packages that offer a simple way to launch a concept into their operation – one such example is the package created with Chicago Town for their Pizzas and the Smeg ALFA43UK oven – all the leg work has been done – all the optimum menu timings, products selections have been developed and the package is ready to buy and have installed, up and running, almost immediately.
- We have an extensive development kitchen facility at our Pitstone HQ and this is open to all within the industry. It showcases a vast array of cooking equipment and customers can see these pieces in the flesh and try them out before they specify them for their kitchens. Our development team can work closely with a university's own chefs/caterers to look at equipment and create new menus, adapt recipes and perfect equipment timings to enhance cook/bake/regeneration results or bring in our tried and tested concepts to also maximise their operation.

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

www.rhhall.com and the recently re-launched website of www.maestrowave.com

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