



## TUCO OCTOBER 2015 OVENS FEATURE

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### ***What are the key considerations of buying a new oven?***

University caterers should consider their equipment needs in line with current and future menu requirements, student numbers and times/peaks in service – for example, it may be that two smaller, versatile ovens that can adapt to changing service needs are better than investing in one large unit or that one larger bake-off oven could cover the breakfast sitting by itself and then bake-off products, such as baguettes, ready to be filled for the lunch service.

They may also offer differing levels of service throughout the academic year so they should also assess this in line with their current catering facilities and any budgets available and look at the potential return in sales this additional equipment could bring as with bake-off 'on the go' popularity and equally any cost savings in terms of energy usage.

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 Smeg ALFA ovens can be stacked one on top of the other – so you can save on space yet double the output. Brand new for 2015 are 2 side opening models to further enhance the range and offer an alternative to the standard drop down door models. 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.

Whatever the choice of oven, caterers 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 – they shouldn't be tempted to go down the cheap import route. They should also consider the availability of spare parts and after sales service, plus what length of warranty is available.

### ***Do university caterers use their ovens to their full potential?***

This entirely depends upon the current set-up and type of operation and the hours of service and the level and skills of staffing. It is vital that caterers fully understand all the features that their ovens have in order to use them to their full potential. Many university caterers are fully versed in the capabilities of their equipment and have devised their menus and service offerings across the day in response to this.

Caterers should look at the flexibility of their equipment 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.

### ***What is the one essential piece of oven kit that universities should invest in?***

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.

But with university caterers facing stiff competition from the High street for the student pound, they 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 stick to one brand of oven throughout a kitchen or can caterers have a combination of brands?***

The choice is entirely up to the individual catering managers and their menu requirements. In terms of equipment operation and familiarity it is useful to stick with one brand, especially if you find one that works particularly well for you. Having one brand is also advantageous when it comes to servicing and spare part availability.

However, there are many types of 'ovens' available – ranging from microwaves to combi steamers – and one brand may simply not be able to meet all the needs of a busy kitchen with a varied menu.

### ***What are the latest oven technologies?***

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.

Energy efficiency is fast becoming a key factor in many purchases. Many ovens will need hard wiring to a certain kW rating, but unique to Smeg is an adjustable kW rating on larger units. Operators can easily adjust the machine from 3kW to 8.3kW, dependent on the power supply available and the output required. Some units remain operational from a simple 13 amp plug, making the unit easy to install and keeping energy costs low.

### ***Website for further information:***

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

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