



B&I MAGAZINE – JUNE 2016 OVENS FEATURE

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What types of oven are available?

There are many choices available within the commercial oven market, whether gas, electric, dual fuel or increasingly induction, the options are wide and varied and come down to personal preference as well as the menu offered, plus other considerations such as space and budget restrictions. Whatever the preference though, I would recommend that 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 on-going changing demands that come with any busy, professional hotel kitchen.

Microwave ovens are definitely an essential part of every commercial kitchen – essential for speed of service yet still allowing a chef to prepare and offer a wide choice of menu. Microwaves are also very energy efficient. If simple reheat and defrosting of foods is required then a microwave will suffice, but if a chef wants to reheat and cook food products then a combination microwave convection oven is well advised. The latest and most flexible combination microwave oven from Maestrowave is the Combi Chef 7. It is able to operate in a combination of modes and can bake, roast, grill, steam, defrost, regenerate, microwave, boil or simply keep food warm all in one flexible, efficient unit. Packed full of new features and the latest version of Menu Creator (Menu Creator 2.0™) the oven will produce the best results ever in super quick time, allowing for 99 menu's to be pre-programmed using any method of oven, microwave, grill or combination. There is a video showing all the features and benefits of this 'Intelligent Chef' online – www.rhhall.com

For more traditional oven cooking, the Smeg ALFA Range of bake-off ovens provides an equally flexible solution. Ideal for breakfast service, savouries, breads and morning goods including the most delicate of products, like croissants, can be cooked to perfection. Plus use of these ovens can expand way beyond that – in fact, there is relatively little that can't be cooked!

What should caterers consider before buying new equipment?

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

Space and installation aspects are also key considerations. Consider the footprint of some ovens in comparison to their potential output and whether products can be stacked, one on top of the other. Chefs can easily switch between one or two ovens depending on demand,

which will give them great flexibility and potentially added profits when operating to full capacity, off-setting initial outlays. Alternatively a secondary smaller back-up oven such as the Smeg ALFA43UK could be installed to help cater for peaks – or a microwave added for speed. There is a huge range of options to suit and fulfil all needs and cost effectively.

An oven to look out for: The Smeg ALFA144XE1 has a proven track record of success and is already being used by some of the UK's leading operators. Recently selected as the winner of the Ranges & Ovens category at the 2015 Product Excellence Awards, this is one of the most technically advanced ovens on the market today, offering an innovative and versatile cooking solution.

Are there any environmental considerations?

Energy efficiency is extremely important. As the leading independent catering equipment distributor in the UK we work on behalf of a number of the leading brands in the industry and the majority if not all of these companies now manufacture products that have sustainable and environmentally friendly technology in their designs. Equipment is evolving all the time and there are plenty of very good pieces of kit on the market which can help an operation build their green credentials and become more energy efficient.

Many ovens will need hard wiring to a certain kW rating, but unique to Smeg is a switchable power supply that can be run from different kW ratings depending on the power on site – anything from 3kW plug-in to 8.3kW 3 phase hardwired - making them ideal for any site with no limitations.

What features are most useful?

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 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.

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.

New for 2016, the ALFA140UK features a 4x 1/1 GN cooking capacity, all from a 13amp plug – combining a large cooking capacity with easy plug & go operation and low energy consumption.

What one tip would you offer on getting the best from your oven?

To help make the right choice, chefs must be clear on the intended use of their oven. Look at 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.

Website for further information:

For more information, please visit www.rhall.com

R H Hall are the Sole UK Distributor for the Smeg range of Foodservice Ovens.

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