



TUCO OCTOBER 2016 OVENS FEATURE

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What Ovens are essential to any university 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. 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.

Do oven requirements change depending on the menu or if a kitchen serves more than one university catering outlet?

University caterers should consider their equipment needs in line with current and future menu requirements, student numbers and times/peaks in 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.

Is it better to have one large oven or multiple ovens that can be switched off when not in use?

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. Having 2 or more ovens also provides peace of minds, particularly in busy periods. Should any down-time be experienced, due to faults or maintenance, the 'back-up' oven can cover crucial tasks to keep a food offering available.

A model to look out for is the new Smeg ALFA140UK, launched in early 2016. Featuring a 4x 1/1 GN capacity, yet still operating from a 13amp plug, this oven provides an ideal back up unit in a busy kitchen. For more details, visit www.rhhall.com

How important is it for caterers to consider energy use when buying a new oven?

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.

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

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.

What tip would you offer caterers on getting the most out of their ovens?

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.

Website for further information:

For more information, please visit www.rhhall.com

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