



MICROWAVES FEATURE 2017 HOSPITAL CATERER MAGAZINE

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

Why are Microwaves an essential item for a hospital kitchen?

Microwaves are an essential part of any commercial kitchen and the latest technology means today's machines are sophisticated and easy to use, producing excellent results in a fraction of the time it takes conventional cooking methods. The versatility of microwaves is often hugely underestimated. Microwaves today are split into 2 main categories – standard microwave only, which are perfect for reheating a wide range of foods – and combination microwaves, which offer huge versatility for cooking a wider range of products, with the speed of microwave cooking. Combination ovens are perfect where space is limited and provide a 'kitchen in a box'.

The market leading Sharp range of microwaves available through RH Hall offer heavy and extra heavy duty build quality with total control, flexibility and versatility –with in-built features to save time and energy. The best-selling range goes from 1000W to 1900W to cater for all foodservice applications and are available in both touchpad or manual control versions.

The Maestrowave Combi Chef 7 is able to operate in a variety and combination of cook modes making it the most flexible, efficient and easy to use oven yet! It can bake, roast, grill, steam, defrost, regenerate, microwave, boil or simply keep food warm - this is the oven that can do it all. This high speed oven features Menu Creator 2.0™ software. Packed with features, the oven will produce the best results at the simple touch of a button – a total combination of 11 cooking modes can be used to achieve top quality results. Up to 99 menus can be pre-programmed to ensure consistency time after time. But don't be daunted, the Menu Creator 2.0™ is extremely easy to use; however, if required, full technical support is available from RH Hall. There is a web video available on line which demonstrates the benefits of combination Microwave ovens - visit www.rhhall.com and follow the link on the home page.

What are the latest technologies for microwaves?

Leading brands are developing models with new features and functionality in response to customers looking for product innovation. One key is not just the equipment itself, but in menu's and food products too – the marrying of equipment and food/menu developments to get the maximum quality, value for money and labour saving solutions.

Hospitals can dramatically improve their meal delivery service whilst cutting food wastage and energy costs with the unique, fully automated iWave® 'straight to plate' foodservice solution. Suitable for chilled, frozen and ambient foods, it's very economical to run with an eco-friendly carbon footprint, providing a saving of up to 70% over conventional foodservice methods.

With this system, ward kitchens are able to provide patients a choice of good quality, nutritional meals 24/7, within 5 minutes from request. The iWave® is extremely easy to use - manual controls have been replaced with a "fool-proof" barcode scanner and unique encrypted barcodes on dishes, with any chance of operator error being removed; every meal is delivered on demand, on time and at its best, every time. And because the food is

not handled, it creates a very hygienic operation. Any foodservice volume demand, from a one off ward to a complete multi-sited hospital mobilisation, can be accommodated. The iWave® system also features a stock control system and this can replace much of the manual intervention currently required to re-order stock. The added benefits of waste and stock loss reporting will give management early warning of slow moving lines and potential misappropriation of stock.

The iWave® plated meal systems are now specified within the NHS Supply Chain framework contract, so any Trust can now order via the NHS Supply Chain without having to do their own OJEU tender. Working with all the leading approved food partners (most are featured on the NHS Supply Chain ready meals contract), iWave® is proven to be a very successful quality foodservice solution for hospitals throughout the country.

What other factors should hospital caterers consider when specifying new microwaves?

To choose the right kind of microwave, operators should look at their menu offering and decide what tasks the microwave oven should undertake. If the microwave is to be used mainly for simple reheating and defrosting of foods then a straight-forward commercial microwave will suffice. However, if you wish to reheat and cook food products then a combination microwave oven is well advised. Items such as pastry will become soggy if reheated in an ordinary microwave whereas using a combination microwave the crisp, golden brown and conventional finished result will be achieved in microwave time!

It is very important to choose the correct microwave oven wattage. You need to select an oven with sufficient power, but just as importantly, do not over specify. If too low, frustrations can be caused by delays, and if too high, it will be difficult for the user to judge the timing of small portions. Whilst it is common for caterers to choose speed (the higher the output the faster reheat times), it is also very important to understand that for some food products too much speed will destroy smaller portions of food or the delicate and sugary types of products.

Many cheaper imports are flooding into the UK and it can be tempting to go down this route, but unknowingly to many, a lot of this equipment doesn't have any product conformity standards and the back-up of a full warranty. Go for a well-known brand - guaranteed quality doesn't cost you more! Regardless of size or duty, sturdy manufacture is a 'must' and this is what you get by choosing a well-known brand - anything else won't perform or last. Choose a leading brand with an established reputation for good quality, durability and reliability. These brands usually build in great operational features too, which should always be considered.

It really can be a mine field selecting the best equipment out of the hundreds of brands available and variations of equipment on the market. It really depends on the numbers to cater for and staffing levels – including whether a chef is employed or whether the hospital has more a basic catering kitchen/operation. The amount of space available in the kitchen is also a factor to carefully consider. Ideally as much of the kit a caterer has should be used daily, although obviously it's not always the case, but there's no point in having lots of individual pieces of kit if they are going to sit on a shelf for the majority of the time! Each piece of kit has to earn its keep and no caterer can afford to have kit lying around under-utilised. Caterers should assess their real needs in line with current and future menu requirements and numbers to cater for too.

R H Hall are the Sole UK & Eire Distributors for the Sharp range of commercial microwave ovens, and Exclusive Worldwide Distributor for the Maestrowave range of Catering Equipment

For more information:

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