



MICROWAVES & LIGHT EQUIPMENT CARE HOME CATERING – WINTER 2016

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

What features on the latest generation of microwave ovens are going to be the most important/of greatest value in the Care Home kitchen?

When looking to invest in new microwaves, Care Home Caterers should look at models with variable power, as this will allow more dense food products to be reheated/cooked at slower speeds, allowing for the conduction of heat to work through to the middle to avoid an overcooked outside and raw centre! The use of variable power works in the same way as your hob and gives you the exact control you need to create speed yet a quality cooked/reheat result. A further feature to look for is stage cooking. This allows an operator to program a series of different defrost, cook or reheat tasks, allowing 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.

In addition, energy efficiency is a top requirement for many users and is fast becoming a definite key feature. Machines that can produce optimum results whilst keeping energy usage low will meet the needs of many new or refurbished kitchens.

There will always be a place in every kitchen for a basic microwave, but future developments are likely to focus on automation, particularly for multi-sited operations. Menu consistency is key and machines which offer easy menu programming will become more and more appealing. The revolutionary iWave® Foodservice Solution uses microwave technology to provide a fully automated, 'straight to plate' system. With barcode scanners replacing traditional touchpad or manual controls, the iWave® offers a 'fool-proof' solution for care homes and many other applications. We can work with various food companies to fully test and develop a bespoke menu for any site. With e-reporting options available, stock and budget control can be also managed easily.

How should the Care Home Caterer select the right microwave?

To choose the right kind of microwave, consumers 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.

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.

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.

New for 2016 is the Maestrowave MW10 1000W Microwave, which offers a unique optimised microwave distribution system and cavity, to ensure perfect results every time. The MW10 offers amazing value for those on a tight budget, who still want to ensure they are buying a fully commercial product. This is backed up by a 3 year magnetron warranty, protecting the 'heart' of the machine.

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 search for 'CC7'.

What are the other items of light equipment that no Care Home kitchen should be without, and what should the Care Caterer consider when investing in new items of equipment such as blenders, mixers, food processors, panini grills etc?

In addition to a microwave, many sites will need a solution for stove top cooking such as frying, poaching or boiling. Induction is a fairly recent technology that combines cooking speed with safety and energy efficiency. The induction process works by 'direct' heating of a metal cooking vessel, as opposed to using 'heat transfer' which you have when burning gas on a traditional cooking stove. For nearly all models of induction cooktop, the cooking vessel must be made of a ferromagnetic metal or placed on an interface disk which enables non-induction cookware to be used on induction cooking surfaces. This direct heating creates an incredibly safe environment, with cooking surfaces being cool to touch when the pan is removed, and also ensures that the energy generated is used efficiently. All heat is passed through the pan and in turn, the food being cooked. Very little ambient heat is generated, helping to keep the kitchen cooler and ensuring all the heat ends up in the right place.

The Maestrowave MC30L4B Induction Hob offers an affordable and compact solution for those taking their first steps into induction cooking. With a single cooking zone and easy to use controls, this countertop unit provides an option for smaller sites or perhaps those just testing the compatibility of their menu with induction technology.

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 type of operation, the numbers to cater for and staffing levels – including whether a chef is employed or whether the home has more a basic catering kitchen/operation. The amount of space available in the home's 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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