



## Hotel F&B Magazine – October 2014

### Feature: Ovens

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#### ***What are the most essential types of oven any hotel should have?***

There is a lot of choice on the equipment market for prime cooking, whether it is gas, electric, dual fuel or increasingly induction, the choice is wide and varied and comes 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.

#### **The options:**

**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!

*For example, a beef topside joint of up to 6lb (2.7kg) can be cooked in combination mode in just 11 minutes. By using the combination mode of grill and convection, you can also be sure of a quality result. Accelerated cooking, with quality!*

Menu Creator 'create your own menu' feature now allows for up to 99 menus to be pre-programmed using any method of oven, microwave, grill or combination or microwave plus grill using the turbo fan function on or off.

Errors are eliminated with perfect cooking stages and timings all very easily pre-programmed onto the unit's Menu Creator 2.0™ software. Great results can be achieved within both skilled and non-skilled operations and ideal for those dishes

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

Smeg also recently added models with the oven chamber lined in refractory stone to combine traditional cooking methods with modern technology to enable the foods to develop further in flavour whilst cooking – creating dishes with sublime tastes!

**And just launching at the end of September**, Smeg have added further models to their best-selling ALFA range: new side opening ovens to complement their bake-off range. Based on the ALFA43 oven, there are three new electromechanical models available: Convection only (model ALFA45); Multifunction (convection, convection + humidifier, static) with pizza stone on the cavity floor (model ALFA45MFPGN) and Multifunction with normal cavity for 3 trays (ALFA45MF).

Also based on the wide bodied versions, as used by a number of top foodservice operations, there will be two electronic models: Convection only (model ALFA146XE) and Convection + Humidity + Grill (model ALFA146GH).

***Should ovens be multifunctional and able to adapt to a hotel's many catering functions, or should a kitchen contain specific pieces of kit?***

Hotels offer a varied and often highly skilled food offering and in an ideal world it would be great to have numerous pieces of kit to handle various cooking tasks, but unless a hotel has a big budget and lots of space to work with, I would say that without a doubt an oven that can 'multi task' in response to the varied and changing menu needs will be a good primary option and a good, cost effective investment and be space saving too. The Maestrowave Combi Chef 7 for instance will work for the smaller hotel catering operation through to those catering for much larger numbers.

***What are the essential features of modern oven equipment? Are there any new technologies coming to market that hotel F&B managers should look out for?***

For pastries and delicate products like croissants the Smeg ALFA range can cook these to perfection with their efficient fan configuration which circulates the heat evenly within the oven chamber. Other features on the Smeg include: rapid pre-heat function to enable fast recovery after unloading; easy control functions especially for de-skilled operation; auto power cut-out to save energy when not in use; programme pre-sets and manual options for ease of operation – so at the touch a button set menu items can be cooked quickly; cool touch doors for safety; fans for efficient heat circulation; grill function for versatility, when finishing off foods and the ability to vent that wonderful bakery smell into the premises if required!

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With regards to the **Maestrowave Combi Chef 7**, items such as pastry, which become soggy if reheated in an ordinary microwave, can achieve that golden brown slightly crispy finish when heated in this Combi with microwave speeds. New menus can be developed and adapted easily using the **Menu Creator2.0™** software and then deployed via an updated SD card at the touch of a button! Errors are eliminated, with perfect cooking stages and timings all pre-programmed on the software, so quality results can be delivered time after time, regardless of which chef is preparing the dish, helping kitchen service and increased efficiency and throughput of orders.

The beauty of **Menu Creator 2.0™** is that it is extremely simple to understand and operate. Loading menu information takes seconds and accessing saved menus for updating is very easy too. However, if a user requires it, full technical support is available. The system operates off standard PC software and is Windows 7 compatible.

With the **Combi Chef 7's** ability to offer a number of cooking stages, hotel chefs can program in a series of different defrost /cook / reheat tasks to allow 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.

#### ***How important is energy efficiency when choosing 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.

Hotel F&B managers should look for newer energy efficient models that help to save on water, gas and electricity consumption whilst ensuring maximum performance. We also find equipment from the leading brands are very well built with extended warranty and regular maintenance intervals built in – both of which definitely help sustainability as does very importantly looking at the whole life costs of a piece of equipment rather than initial outlay – a longer term perspective is far more beneficial for a business and the environment.

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 unit 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.

Our team can also advise on the savings available through manufacturers registered with the ECA (Enhanced Capital Allowance) Scheme which provides tax relief for businesses that invest in energy efficient equipment and with The Carbon Trust where there is an Energy Technology List which details products that offer better energy efficiency and reduced running costs.

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***What other features/issues surrounding ovens should hotels consider?***

Hotel F&B managers and chefs 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. It may seem fundamental, but consider the footprint of some ovens in comparison to their potential output. Both Smeg ALFA ovens and the Maestrowave Combi Chef 7 can be stacked one on top of the other – so you can save on space yet double the output. 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.

Also many ovens will need hard wiring to a certain KW rating – unique to Smeg is that the range is switchable i.e. they can run off different KW ratings depending on the power on site – anything from 3KW upto 8.3KW making them ideal for any site, there is no limitations. The Maestrowave Combi-Chef 7 is simply a plug in and go unit!

***Is there a danger of chefs losing their skills if an oven is able to do too much for them?***

The multi-tasking ovens are all about making life easier in terms of efficiency and throughput and in some instances, a chef's full repertoire of skills won't be utilised to create dishes and get them served. But with regards to a unit like the Combi Chef 7, a chef's skills can be fully utilised as the oven allows them to be even more creative in terms of dishes and throughput – for instance, it may allow them to offer a greater variety of dishes; experiment with their menus, because they can be confident of being able to deliver each of them consistently time after time in the most efficient way.

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***Further information readers may find of interest...***

***Top tips on choosing a new oven:***

Whatever the choice of equipment, chefs 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. Also consider the availability of spare parts and after sales service, plus what length of warranty is available.

To help make the right choice, chefs must be clear on the intended use: 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.

With RH Hall's access to the most extensive range of foodservice equipment available on the market today, together with our vast knowledge and experience within the sector, we are ideally placed to offer expert, unbiased advice. In addition our development team can work closely with a hotel's own chef to look at equipment and create new menus, adapt recipes and perfect equipment timings to enhance cook/bake/regeneration results. Chef's and F&B managers can also come along to our development kitchen and see and use the ovens first hand.

For more information, please visit [www.rhall.com](http://www.rhall.com) or call our sales team on 01296 663400.

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