



## Press Information May 08

### Microwaves Feature

**Statement on the market from Ray Hall** – Is it growing or shrinking since the smoking ban? What factors are affecting the market?

“Sales of microwaves have grown significantly in the past year, partly due to the smoking ban, but also due to the introduction of time saving extras, for some microwaves, such as the Cavity Protection System, that amongst other benefits make the ovens easier to clean and helps to avoid costly repairs,” says **Ray Hall, managing director of R H Hall.**

“We now have a third wave of outlets that have been forced to look at the way they do business, with less revenue coming from wet sales.”

“It is also true that there is an ever increasing range of high quality food available, with the food companies and microwave experts working together to enable the novice caterer to make available an extensive menu, without a huge investment in kitchen appliances and space.

“Microwaves are cheaper to run than many kitchen appliances, take up less space and have a small carbon foot print.”

My recommendation for a pub or any establishment that has seen a decline in sales since the smoking ban is to contact a specialist microwave oven supplier or a well established catering equipment distributor who can advise on the correct machine and put them in contact with a food supplier who can provide guidance on an appropriate menu."

The Microwave association (MTA) is a well-established independent association and a good point of reference if in doubt of whom you should call!"

There is no doubt that by adding a high quality food offering pubs can increase turnover and with expert help, even those without skilled chefs available can provide an appropriate food offering for their clientele."

### **Microwave or combination microwave?**

The microwave oven in today's commercial kitchen has become a vital piece of equipment for defrosting and rapid reheating of pre-cooked foods. In fact, today's catering kitchen often has several to meet today's busy and fast demand for turnaround.

If you require the microwave to be used mainly for the simple reheat and defrosting of foods then a straight microwave will suffice. However, if you wish to reheat and cook food products then a microwave convection oven is well advised. Items such as pastry will become soggy if reheated in a plain microwave where as using a combination microwave convection oven the crisp golden brown and conventional finished result will be achieved however in microwave speed!

It is likely that most caterers have a need for reheat, defrost and cooking tasks and in this case, it is recommended that both a combination microwave oven and a microwave oven be both purchased. A combination microwave oven will not replace the need for microwave oven and visa versa. These two types of oven work extremely well in tandem together. For example, whilst reheating /cooking pastry products using the combination model the ordinary microwave is available for all your straightforward reheat/defrost requirements. The features available today allow a choice of manual and programmable models and some even allow the chef to enter the detailed names of individual dishes and daily/weekly specials (i.e. as with the Maestrowave Combi Chef V)

### **What size of microwave and what features?**

It is also very important to choose the correct microwave oven wattage. You need to choose an oven with sufficient power, but just as importantly, do not over specify. If too low, you can be frustrated by delays, and if too high, it will be difficult to judge the timing of small portions.

The wattage determines the speed of reheat/cook times. Genuine commercial microwave ovens start at 1000 watts and go up to 3200 watts. The most popular outputs are 1000, 1200, 1500 and 1900, as these output sizes can all be run from a standard 13amp socket and are generally fairly compact in size yet big enough inside to accept a good-sized dinner plate. The Sharp and Maestrowave ranges are good examples of this popularity.

Whilst it is common for chefs to choose speed (the higher the output the faster reheat times), it is 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. The higher output models (above 1900 watt) are designed for the

reheating of larger portions of food and as the oven cavity sizes are much larger than the regular commercial microwave the requirement of more microwave output is vital to aid more even cook/reheat result.

It should be remembered that microwave oven technology cooks from the outside in! Only up to a depth of about 2.5 inches, the rest of the cooking/reheat process is through natural conduction, as conventional cooking, however the microwave has the advantage of reaching a depth of 2.5 inches immediately, therefore providing a much faster result than that of conventional cooking.

Choosing a microwave with variable power is also very important, as this will allow more dense food products to be reheated/cooked slower 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 the chef to 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. Most leading brand models now have this function as standard.

### **Build Quality and reliability**

This is vital in today's modern catering kitchen. When choosing a commercial microwave take a close look at the build quality and make sure it is solid enough for the intended use. Buying straight from a brochure / catalogue can be very misleading and there is a lot of quality of build differences between models. The

leading brands will always be a safe bet as they are established and have built a good reputation on quality and reliability over the years.

Generally, the lower advertised super priced type models should be questioned as often they are cheaper because savings have been made on the production build and quality of components/parts used.

Good build specification to be looked for is detailed below:

- Good quality stainless steel inside and out is a must!
  
- Check the stirrer cover type used (located at the top of the ovens cavity) and ensure it is made of a solid type plastic. This part is vital as it allows the microwave energy to enter the oven cavity and needs to be kept clean from food debris at all times. A more solid type plastic will aid for easy cleaning and will avoid damage when cleaning. If food is left to build up on this part, it will eventually destroy the roof liner and cause a possible burn up in the ovens cavity.
  
- Check the control functions to ensure they are responsive and have a solid feel during operation.
  
- Opt for a well-known synonymous and proven brand. In the event of any service issues, you are more likely to obtain a faster and more reliable back up.
  
- Buy from a reputable and knowledgeable supplier and check out the quality of build in the flesh – avoid purchasing from price driven mailers unless you are familiar with what you are buying!

## **New Developments**

### **Unique Cavity Protection System**

The ***Cavity Protection System*** is said to be one of the most unique and simple inventions for the commercial microwave oven user, making it safer to use, easier to clean with longer term financial benefits.

Kris Brearley, sales director for RH Hall says, "If you are familiar with microwaves usage in a working kitchen, caterers will appreciate the problems with food splatter and liquid spillage. Build up inside the oven's cavity and roof is very likely to lead to burn ups and damage which is not normally covered by the manufacturer's warranty. This new system has many benefits, from being more hygienic to saving money on down-time and costly repairs."

#### ***The six top benefits of the Cavity Protection System include-***

1. Hygienic: It helps keep the cavity of the microwave clean, in turn, making the product more efficient.
2. Cross Contamination: It helps stop cross contamination with the removable and replaceable Silicon sheets.
3. Easy to Clean: It is easy to clean with washing up liquid or can be placed in a non-caustic use dishwasher.
4. Helps to Avoid Down-Time: The CPS system avoids ceiling plates sparking or base plates breaking, which prevents the Sharp Commercial Microwave breaking down during busy periods.

5. Helps to Avoid Costly Repairs: The system avoids serious damage to the interior of the oven with burnt food particles with its protection liner, therefore avoiding potential costly repairs.

6. Pays for Itself: The cost of one repair would pay for a Cavity Protection Liner and in the future would save hundreds of pounds in repairs.

*How does this new system work?*

The Cavity Protection System simply slots into the oven's cavity and is easily removed for daily cleaning. The system incorporates special silicon food safe anti cross contamination sheets, which help to make cleaning this liner even easier and provide further health and hygiene benefits.

## **Training – what is on offer?**

The microwave oven is one of the most cost effective pieces of equipment in the commercial kitchen. It will pay for itself hundreds of times over during its expected life span.

Training comes in two forms - How to use it and how to look after it. At R H Hall, we train our distributors through extensive set down programmes so that they are able to offer the best advice and training to the end user. We also have recently invested in an extensive facility at our head quarters – “Halls Kitchen.” Divided into zones, it is fitted out with the very latest equipment. This is a superb facility where both menu development chefs and our own trainers work closely together to create the ideal environment for menu planning and equipment training. Such advice as to when and how to clean the oven, service interval recommendations and the best use of the oven are just part of the training given to customers.

### **Here are some examples.**

Simple regular low cost maintenance is all that is required to keep your microwave in peak health and condition. However, you can also help prolong the life of your microwave by taking three simple steps:

#### **1. Keep the ovens cavity & inner door clean of food spillage / deposits at all times.**

This will avoid cavity burn ups and prolong the life of its little heart “The Magnetron”. This measure will also help the consistency and speed of reheat/ cook times.

## **2. Weekly clean the oven's filter**

This is located normally on the underside of the machine and is designed for simple removal/cleaning. This will ensure that the correct flow of clean filtered air is able to pass over the microwave's critical components and therefore will prolong the life of machine.

## **3. Regular six monthly or annual servicing.**

This is a very simple and low cost service, which will ensure safety and life expectancy but very importantly will help avoid breakdowns at times when you least expect or need them.

The cost for a basic service and safety check should be around £35 - £50.

Replacement parts normally encountered and required to be changed are wave-guide covers (in oven cavity) and door switches - the cost for these parts vary but are generally low cost to replace.

## **Case Study**

A catering business that sees microwave power as central to a quality, home-style menu is Ponti's, the chain founded in 1963 that today has over 50 Italian cafés and restaurants around London. "You would be hard pushed to find a heavier user of microwaves than Ponti's," says managing director Stefano Ispani.

Most Ponti's outlets have a bank of 6-8 ovens, typically Sharp R24AT models supplied by RH Hall. These play a key role in regenerating all the chain's traditional hot dishes, such as lasagne and spaghetti bolognese, which are either cooked fresh daily on the premises at each restaurant or delivered chilled from Ponti's central kitchen facility in Islington, north London. Despite their 1,900W rating, the ovens have one of the smallest footprints available and operate off 13amp plugs. They are also stackable, saving valuable space for preparation behind the serving counter.

Important fitments include preset touch controls - with up to 20 available to cover menu needs - and an auto-repeat function. Ispani also likes the "countercheck" facility on each oven, which allows Ponti's managers to monitor the number of dishes prepared on each preset and quickly check the popularity of key dishes without needing to keep manual records.

**For further information contact R H Hall's office on 01296 663400, visit [www.rhhall.com](http://www.rhhall.com)**

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