



MICROWAVES FEATURE SLTN 12TH NOVEMBER 2015

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Many operators across Scotland will enjoy a boost in customer numbers throughout December. What benefits can a microwave bring to a commercial kitchen at this busy time of year?

The most obvious advantage of a microwave is speed of reheating and cooking, they are essential for speed of service – considerably faster than conventional ovens and they also allow an operator to offer a wider choice of menu. Their versatility also provides advantages and the leading brands are developing models with new features and functionality in response to customers looking for product innovation, so they can be easily operated from a de-skilled base. Microwaves are very energy efficient too. In fact, when cooking vegetables they use three times less energy than that of a gas hob. Most operate from a single 13 amp supply. Their footprint is also smaller than conventional ovens, great where space is at a premium.

Are there any checks businesses can carry out on their microwaves ahead of the festive season to ensure they will hold up to the strain of Decembers heavy usage?

Users should check their festive menu and decide which cooking tasks will be handled in the microwave.

Tests should be carried out in advance to ensure that the microwave being used has the correct wattage to produce the right results for the menu items in question.

Maintenance is also key and the oven should be regularly cleaned to reduce any chances of down-time over the busy festive season. Consider the age and past reliability of your machine – old or potentially faulty units may want to be considered for replacement.

Are there any popular festive foods that are particularly suited to cooking in a microwave?

Vegetables, gravies and sauces will all take particularly well to microwave cooking during the festive season, as well as many desserts – including Christmas Pudding!

Today's microwave ovens are sophisticated, yet easy to use and produce excellent cooking results in a fraction of the time it takes to cook foods conventionally and their versatility is under estimated. Many foods and dishes can be cooked very, very well in a microwave oven: cakes, sauces, meat, fish, vegetables, fruit, pasta, rice, eggs and jams can all be cooked with great results.

There is a great diversity of dishes that can be prepared quickly and easily from fresh ingredients. Not only that, but more nutrients are retained in microwave cooked food than by any other cooking method. In fact, correctly cooked vegetables contain 85% of their original vitamin content, when boiled they often contain none! A great benefit especially for growing children where they would only need to eat a little to get more of the vitamins they need.

In terms of providing a faster service and perhaps expanding your menu pre portioning of certain foods can be stored ready for a quick efficient reheat then served up with fresh cooked food to plate

Meat and pastry products are often better cooked conventionally then re-heated in a microwave oven, but with the versatile combination microwave ovens available, these types of foods can be cooked with microwave technology with excellent results. 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 vice 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 (as with the Maestrowave Combi Chef 7). As the name suggests, the Combi Chef 7 is able to operate in a variety and combination of modes making it the most flexible, efficient and easy to use oven yet! If the chef wants to bake, roast, grill, steam, defrost, regenerate,

microwave, boil or simply keep food warm this is the oven that can do it all. There is a video showing all the features and benefits of the versatile Combi Chef 7 – visit www.rhhall.com to view.

Are there any regular cleaning/maintenance routines operators/chefs should be carrying out to help protect their microwaves during the festive season?

When using your microwave on a regular basis, one thing that shouldn't be overlooked for getting the best from a microwave is regular cleaning - keep the oven's cavity and inner door clean of food spillage/deposits at all times. This will avoid cavity burn ups and prolong the life of its heart "The Magnetron". This measure will also help the consistency and speed of reheat/ cook times. You could purchase the Microsave Cavity Protection System which is a unique and simple cavity liner manufactured from high quality TPX resin - which is safer to use, easier to clean and provides long term financial benefits. This invaluable add on is designed to work with the Sharp Commercial Microwave range and every Sharp sold with the Microsave CPS comes with a lifetime warranty on the cavity.

For those looking to replace their microwave/s ahead of the Christmas season, can you provide some top tips for choosing a new 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.

Always choose from a commercial range of microwaves, consumers shouldn't be tempted to go down the domestic route – these units simply aren't built for the rigours of a professional kitchen. Likewise we would also recommend that cheap imports are also avoided – the testing, safety and product back-up that are offered by the leading brand names are often not available with a cheap import.

For more information, please visit:

www.rhhall.com

www.microwaveassociation.org.uk

www.maestrowave.com

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