

EDUCATERING DECEMBER 2015 OVENS FEATURE



Please attribute any quotes on this information to Kris Brearley, Sales Director, R H Hall

- ***Can you provide a basic summary of the different ovens available to school caterers and how each one can benefit the school sector?***

There is a lot of choice on the equipment market for ovens/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 space and budget restrictions. Whatever the preference though, 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 professional commercial kitchen. Most operations want to offer a varied and attractive food offering and so without a doubt an oven that can 'multi task' in response to that will be a good investment.

Traditional convection ovens provide a straight forward option for bake off and/or grilling and roasting, with excellent potential results. Standard fan ovens are suitable for bread and pastry products, whilst multifunction versions include a grill and are great for roasting.

Oven ranges can be seen as the heart of the kitchen and provide oven space – normally static, although fan options are available – along with a stove top for boiling, frying and poaching. Gas continues to be the most popular option, normally in a 6 burner format – although various burner options, electric options and dual fuel are all available.

Microwave ovens are also an essential part of today's commercial kitchen – essential for speed of service and still allow an operator to 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 an operator wants to reheat and cook food products then a combination microwave convection oven is well advised.

- ***How can ovens change or influence a school's menu? What sort of typical school lunch dishes can be cooked in different ovens?***

Any menu must be backed up with the equipment required to cook it well, or the results will just not be as expected in a busy school kitchen. School kitchens should look for versatile equipment options to ensure they can get the most out of their ovens – particularly where space and budgets are tight.

Fan ovens are ideal for any breakfast goods ie bread and pastries, but can also be used for roasting joints and browning dishes if a multifunction oven is used. Traditional Range Ovens have the advantage of a stove top for simmering sauces and stews and the oven below normally provides a large space for bulk dishes such as casseroles and pasta. However, these ovens are normally static and can lack the versatility needed to get the right results for certain menu items.

Microwaves and Combination Microwaves provide an ideal solution where quick turnaround is required and can reheat or defrost items in a matter of minutes. Combination Microwaves also provide versatility as they include grill and oven options. Space is limited in microwaves however, so are best suited to reheating on demand as opposed to use for an entire lunch service.

The latest and most flexible combination microwave oven from Maestrowave, is the new 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!

- ***Can school kitchens live without a traditional oven and instead rely on more modern oven equipment?***

Yes indeed, by changing over to a dedicated plated meal system, such as iWave®

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 school kitchens. With e-reporting options available, stock and budget control can be also managed easily. As standard, this type of system would lend itself better to smaller canteen numbers, but could however be scaled up to deal with a large canteen demand. The iWave® can be stacked and in many cases operators have a bank of up to 12 units and more to cater for larger serving numbers

We can work with various food companies to fully test and develop a bespoke menu for any site. Ranges of suitable ready meals are widely available and can be supplied as fresh chilled or frozen. Imagine the simplicity of a school kitchen with just a bank of iWave® Systems, incorporating the refrigeration required for storage. So easy to use with no cooking skills required - in fact the pupils could even cook for themselves!

- ***What is the essential oven equipment needed for a school kitchen?***

An oven is a vital piece of equipment in any kitchen, whether it is part of a cooking range or a stand-alone model, 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 ongoing changing demands that come with any professional commercial kitchen. School kitchens need to have a varied and attractive food offering and an oven that can 'multi task' in response to that will be a good investment.

The Smeg ALFA Range of bake-off ovens provides an innovative and versatile solution. Savouries, breads and morning goods including the most delicate of products, like croissants, can be cooked to perfection, but what a lot of people don't realise is that the equipment's flexibility expands way beyond that – in fact, there is relatively little that these ovens can't cook! Another big plus is that they look good enough to be sited 'front of house' with the aroma of freshly baking food, helping to maximise sales.

- ***What environmental considerations should caterers look for when buying a new oven?***

Energy efficiency is fast becoming a key factor in many purchases. Many ovens will need hard wiring to a certain kW rating, but unique to Smeg is an adjustable kW rating on larger units. Operators can easily adjust the machine from 3kW to 8.3kW, dependent on the power supply available and the output required. Some units remain operational from a simple 13 amp plug, making the unit easy to install and keeping energy costs low.

- ***What new technologies are there within the oven market?***

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.

Manufacturers are always looking for new ways to improve cooking performance – features such as twin reversing fans on many of the Smeg ALFA models ensure even cooking temperatures and impressive results, time and time again. Whilst preset controls are not a new technology, things are continually being improved to provide ease of use and menu programmes offer a solution where consistency is key.

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. The Smeg ALFA ovens can be stacked one on top of the other – so you can save on space yet double the output. Brand new for 2015 are 2 side opening models to further enhance the range and offer an alternative to the standard drop down door models. The ALFA45UK is a traditional fan oven, perfect for baking and reheating a wide range of goods, whilst the ALFA45MFPGN adds a grill and humidification features for roasting. This model also includes a refractory stone base which is perfect for cooking pizza's! Both models accept 435x320mm trays and have a temperature range of 50-250°C.

- ***Please include any other comments that you feel our readers will be interested in.***
R H Hall are an ESPO accredited supplier and carry over 10,000 items of catering equipment from leading foodservice brands. We have an extensive development kitchen facility at our Pitstone HQ and this is open to all within the industry. It showcases a vast array of equipment and customers can see these pieces in the flesh and try them out before they specify them for their business. We also stock our leading brands through our 1,400 nationwide dealers, so help and advice on what is best for your catering operation is on hand at a regional level. We can also offer a complete professional kitchen design service and can manufacture bespoke tailor made solutions through our UK based factory.
- ***Please provide a definitive website address where readers can go for more info on your company.***
For more information, please visit www.rhhall.com

FOR FURTHER PRESS INFORMATION CONTACT: Emma Smith, 01296 663400
emma.smith@rhhall.com

R H Hall, Hallco House, Beacon Court, Pitstone Green Business Park, Pitstone, Bedfordshire, LU7 9GY
T: 01296 663400 F: 01296 663401 E: sales@rhhall.com W: www.rhhall.com