THE CATERER

EQUIPMENT BUYING GUIDE

2020

FEA Foodservice Equipment Association

Information Involvement Influence

ADAM HOLLINGWORTH PHOTOGRAPHY

FEA Foodservice Equipment Association

Information Involvement Influence

We'd like to thank the following FEA members for their expertise and contributions to this guide: Adande, Brita, Foster, Hobart, Hoshizaki, Meiko, Panasonic, Rational, RH Hall, Valentine and Welbilt

Welcome

The world has changed. Foodservice operators have different needs, different protocols, different challenges. If we are to survive and prosper, the whole foodservice industry needs to work together.

FEA is an independent trade association with more than 200 members, from large multinationals to UK-based SMEs, making it the authoritative voice of the foodservice equipment industry. FEA's meetings with government ministers over the past 12 months have given us the platform to influence decisions, from the biggest issues – Covid-19 and Brexit – to more practical matters, such as persuading the Environment Agency to take a more flexible policy on waste management systems, recognising that, depending on the site, technology can offer a greener solution.

The development of technical and policy positions with government and its agencies is a core strand of our work and is unrivalled in the sector. Now we are pushing for even closer ties with other independent associations who share our interests and vision, so that we can use our combined influence to further protect and promote the welfare of the foodservice industry, collectively.

A key change over these last months has been the assimilation and exploitation of digital technology. As we all become more familiar with its potential, FEA is planning to organise a series of virtual events that will offer a forum where operators can meet suppliers to find out about the latest advances and advice in areas such as FOG (fats, oil and grease) and connectivity.

FEA's commitment to driving change through training is stronger than ever. In recent months we have developed virtual courses and we will be enhancing and expanding our training programmes, including the Certified Food Service Professional (CFSP) initiative. It's vital that we continue to invest in skills and give encouragement to the next generation of professionals coming into the foodservice industry.

Sustainability has been a focus of FEA for many years. In 2021 we're underlining our commitment to Net Zero Carbon by 2050 by partnering with the Trees for Cities charity. FEA members signing up will be donating money to plant trees that will offset their carbon footprint and help grow a greener future.

I hope you enjoy this latest edition of the FEA's annual Equipment Guide, produced in co-operation with *The Caterer*. Happy reading!

Steve Hobbs, chair of FEA

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Liquid assets

Quality is the watchword for any type of beverage, from cold-drip coffee to filtered waters, so you need a top-notch machine to match

SHUTTERSTOCK

In July 2020, after the easing of the first lockdown, a survey found that coffee shops were more popular than pubs and restaurants (Allegra World Coffee Portal).

Of the 3,000 respondents, 55% had visited a café or coffee shop in the six weeks following reopening, compared to 28% who had visited pubs, bars and restaurants. The survey also found that, despite the pandemic, a healthy 47% of consumers felt safe visiting a coffee shop.

Having said that, it's not just coffee shops that serve coffee, of course. These days consumers expect to be able to order a decent coffee in a pub, restaurant, canteen, leisure centre and most consumers will expect to be able to order an espresso-based drink.

Quality is key when it comes to being successful with an espresso coffee menu. Consumers have developed sophisticated tastes and know their flat white from their latte. Quality used to rely on trained baristas, but that's not really the case now. These days a top-notch bean-to-cup machine can get very close to a top-notch barista – and it will serve a variety of items at the touch of a button. As a general rule, these labour-saving systems will also serve drinks more quickly, making it easier for operators to cope with peak demand.

Cleaning espresso machines can also be a complicated procedure, so look for ones with self-cleaning programmes. Integral milk systems can be especially difficult and unpleasant to clean, so anything that automates the process will be welcomed by your staff.

Can a beverage system be multifunctional? That depends on your definition, but there are advanced systems out there that can make many different drinks, hot and cold, with sophisticated milk technologies to get the foam 'just so'. Plus, they produce consistently high-quality products, simply by pressing the relevant icon on an easy-to-use touchscreen.

Of course, espresso isn't the only drink in town. Filtered coffee has been resurgent – the equipment required is simple and the results can be outstanding. There's also cold brew and cold drip coffee, which are still niche but are making inroads into the market. Although similarly named, they use entirely different methods to make coffee, and both require specific specialist equipment. While cold brew is a relatively simple process, whereby the grounds are steeped in water at room temperature, for cold drip you'll need a cold drip tower comprising various containers, valves and filters.

Then there's tea and the big growth in herbal and fruit infusions. According to the UK Tea & Infusions Association, Brits drink 36 billion cups a year. If you're using an urn to heat the water, look for ones with eco features, such as standby modes.

WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE

Moving bottles of water around the country is not eco-friendly. And while consumers have developed a taste for mineral water, many resent paying a premium for it and increasingly ask for a jug of tap when they are eating out. This is why manufacturers have developed on-site water filtering systems. These produce chilled and filtered still and sparkling varieties.

Some foodservice operators offer it free, some charge for it – but at a fraction of the cost of conventional bottled mineral water. Restaurants can have their own branded (reusable) bottles, giving a stylish, upmarket spin to the serve.

One problem with reusable bottles is washing them out, but some dishwasher manufacturers are developing special racks that fit into their standard machines and have clever features to wash bottles, both inside and out, ensuring the filtered water you serve is both refreshing and comes from hygienically clean bottles.

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More haste, less waste

Prime cooking kit can help kitchens of any size cook food faster, more efficiently and with fewer people

Prime cooking equipment is the beating heart of any catering operation. It needs to be powerful and flexible, and able to cook large amounts of food precisely and safely. More businesses are adding modern multifunctional appliances to their kitchens, either to complement their traditional equipment or, increasingly, to replace it.

The latest multifunctional equipment combines the functionality of a range of traditional appliances with powerful systems that allow for precise control over results. This frees up staff from having to constantly monitor food as it cooks, allowing them to do other things.

The advantages are obvious – increasing output and staff productivity, while helping to reduce running costs. Not only does the use of multifunctional appliances reduce the amount of equipment required overall, but on top of that, manufacturers are constantly working to reduce energy consumption.

With many businesses having to make difficult decisions in response to Covid-19, particularly in order to drive costs down, buying new equipment might seem counterintuitive. Once the savings made on both energy bills and the ability for fewer staff to do more work are factored in, the decision seems far more sensible. Alongside this, the increased control over the cooking results helps to reduce spoilage and food wastage, bringing in further savings and helping to make budget planning simpler.

Multifunctional units can not only increase the productivity of kitchens, but also allow for more efficient cooking processes to be introduced. For example, even smaller businesses are able to use the latest combi ovens and compact blast freezers to run batch production processes like cook-chill or cook-freeze, allowing businesses to offer a more diverse prime cooking menu, using fewer people.

Integrating new equipment, as well as using existing equipment in new ways, can help to create the working environments

by the need to operate in a socially distanced manner. The changes to working practices Covid-19 is forcing include an increased emphasis on personal and business hygiene. In practice, this works by making separate work stations for chefs where possible, increasing the amount of space around critical members of staff, and working to reduce handling and minimising touchpoints within the kitchen.

Using multifunctional appliances to streamline the prime cooking processes makes it far easier to maintain a socially distanced kitchen, by making each cook task compartmental and able to be completed by fewer staff, with less contact of either food or equipment. It also frees up space as more room becomes available with the replacement of older and now redundant equipment.

INNOVATION OF INDUCTION

While multifunctional appliances are now extremely powerful and flexible additions to any commercial kitchen, there are still plenty of uses for more hands-on processes to complement them. Luckily, there are modern space- and energy-saving options for these traditional methods. For example, increasing numbers of chefs are being won over by the power and flexibility of induction hobs.

While many chefs remain loyal to the humble gas hob, it's undeniable that if it was invented today there is no way it would catch on. Open flames in a busy workspace? Fossil fuels needed for it to work? It's a health and safety nightmare. Induction cooking essentially rebuilds the entire process from first principles, allowing chefs to transfer the skills they've learned from traditional gas equipment to modern technology that is much more energy efficient, as well as safer.

COOK QUICK

The humble microwave oven has become a staple of the commercial kitchen – it's a useful, familiar and flexible workhorse that does its job quickly and reliably. In recent years microwave technology has been integrated into a wide range of hybrid, high-speed ovens and grills, combining it with convection heat lets you brown products, as well as speeding up the cooking process.

Other technologies, such as infrared and impinger heat systems, have also been combined with microwaves. What these turbocharged appliances have in common is the ability to produce quality food, super-fast, often simply by pushing a button or touchscreen icon. If you're in the market for one, check out a variety of models, since different combinations of heating technologies produce different cooking processes that may be more or less suited to your application.

Making equipment investments which are 'just right' in 2021

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Steve Hemsil

An opinion piece by Steve Hemsil, sales director – UK & Ireland, Welbilt

There's no question that 2020 has been a difficult year for caterers, particularly given that venues up and down the UK have had to quickly adapt to 'the new normal' in order to survive these financially challenging times.

For many, this meant halting refurbishment plans and reconsidering previously arranged equipment investments. As we look towards 2021, venues will hopefully be in a better position to revisit stalled equipment investments, with a new, and arguably wiser outlook than pre-pandemic. However, the importance of ensuring a wise investment is arguably even more crucial.

So, what exactly are the key points that caterers should consider when it comes to making a smart, equipment decision which is *just right* for them?

Well first and foremost, it's important to understand that every business is different, therefore, equipment needs will differ. As such, it is important that caterers consider various venue-specific aspects, such as the space available, their capacity, and menu style when it comes to planning which equipment models they need to invest in.

Another key point to consider is the available budget, particularly given that during these vital times of recovery, many businesses will have had to tighten their belts in order to compensate reduced revenues earned in 2020. The equipment models invested in therefore need to be affordable and appropriate to specific needs of a venue.

For many venues, sourcing multi-functional equipment solutions – such as a combi oven – will be top of the list of investment priorities for 2021; that is if the model comes at the right price, of course. It was for this very reason that Welbilt developed a brand-new range of Convotherm combi ovens – know as the Convotherm maxx – which are *just right*.

So, what exactly makes the maxx range *just right* for caterers that are looking to make a smart purchase decision in 2021?

Well, to summarise this incredible product in simple terms, the new Convotherm maxx allows professional chefs to experience modern combi technology at an ideal price to performance ratio. It offers operators everything they need to be successful. Not too much, not too little. Just German engineering for a surprisingly small price.

Unlike other brands of combi ovens, the Convotherm maxx is also not over-engineered; rather, this all-rounder model boasts an array of powerful, flexible and practical functions which have all been designed to help operators meet the challenges of the new normal, such as hygiene, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness.

At Welbilt, we equally understand that everyday commercial kitchen routines can be hard work, particularly in these new times: service periods are fast-paced , customer demands are altering, plus, the quality and the selection of foods need to be top flight and unique. The Convotherm maxx once again scores on this front thanks to the inclusion of various culinary and ergonomic-led features such Climate Management, Press&Go, Tray-Timer and Quality Management functions, to name a few.

When using these features to their best ability and, more importantly, according to the individual needs of a venue, caterers will be on track for culinary success – success which no longer needs to come at a steep cost as the Convotherm maxx so clearly proves.

When investing in such equipment as this, operators can feel confident about moving into a successful, efficient and hopefully finanically secure future, both in 2021, and beyond.

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Advancing Your Ambitions

An impressive line-up

Live online: check out Rational's most advanced cooking systems ever

Rational UK has launched interactive online events that allow foodservice operators to experience the company's most advanced combi steamer, the iCombi Pro, and the new iVario cooking system.

Rational Live online events are hosted by Rational expert hosts who can be quizzed at any time during the session about specialist information and cooking solutions for particular needs and menus.

Rational's Live online programme is produced in the UK by Rational chefs and features fresh new UK-specific content. The focus is on the advanced cooking intelligence of the iCombi Pro and the iVario, showing how they can enhance productivity, creativity, consistency and functionality. The expert chefs show how Rational's innovative, interactive technologies work with the chef to deliver high-quality and consistent cooking results.

Each Rational Live online lasts about 45 minutes and is accessible via PC, tablet or mobile phone. They are free to attend and can be booked at www.rational-online.com.

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The new iCombi Pro and iVario are the most intelligent cooking systems Rational has ever built. The use of intelligent assistants enhances the chef's capabilities by offering maximum functionality, flexibility, productivity and consistency, while at the same time caring for the environment by reducing consumption of power and water.

A highlight of the iVario's intelligent functions is iZoneControl, which allows the chef to operate individual or several different cooking zones in one pan, each at its own temperature, meaning that different foods can be cooked simultaneously. iZoneControl gives chefs maximum choice, maximum flexibility and maximum control.

One of the stars of the iCombi Pro's four new intelligent functions is iProductionManager, which increases productivity and adds flexibility to production schedules while reducing running costs. It gives the option of cooking different products at the same time, automatically preparing the food to the optimum schedule.

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RATIONAL

Nigel Mendham, executive chef at the Great British Restaurant, Dukes Hotel

A new generation of cooking

Valentine Equipment is recognised across the UK and Ireland as a supplier of an outstanding range of freestanding, built-in and table-top fryers and multi-cookers.

With over 60 years of experience, Valentine is known for its innovative design and Swiss build quality, with its fryers and multi-cookers already used by leading restaurants, pub chains and diverse foodservice operations to deliver consistently great food.

Focused on fulfilling the increasing consumer demand for efficiency, simplicity and reliability, Valentine has developed an exciting range of computer fryers that are fast becoming the new generation of cooking.

Valentine's latest range of computer fryers include both freestanding and built-in options and offer four password-protected cooking programs per pan, enabling even multi-site operators to produce consistent results every time. With the added automatic basket lift feature, users will see a reduction in food waste from overcooking and are able to serve perfectly cooked food with minimal effort.

Steve Elliott, sales director for Valentine Equipment and Cuisinequip, said: "Not only do the Valentine computer fryers offer excellent cooking results due to their precision temperature control and bespoke cooking programmes, they will provide a significant saving in food wastage and oil consumption.

In increasingly busy kitchens, the pre-programmed temperatures and cooking times will minimise any margin for error, avoiding food waste and unnecessary oil degradation. These savings, when considered alongside the reduction in staff training requirements, less labour-intense cooking experience and improved quality control, make the Valentine computer fryer a great investment for independent food outlets and multi-site restaurants alike."

Valentine Equipment's sister company, Cuisinequip, provides an equally high-quality range of induction cooking solutions from HWM, Locher and Berner.

Cuisinequip offers a bespoke design service, allowing you to customise a cook suite to meet the individual needs of your kitchen while maximising the space available; or choose from an extensive range of individual drop-in units that you can build in to your own fabrication.

The broad range of high-quality induction hobs available from Austrian manufacturer HWM feature the latest Swiss induction technology and offer ample flexibility to suit every catering operation.

Precise and easily controllable cooking can be achieved with leading technology, such as precise temperature control, multi-pan cooking zones, pan quality detection and overheat protection, ensuring every kitchen offers consistently great food while reducing energy consumption and maintaining a comfortable working environment; something that is often difficult to achieve with alternative cooking methods.

With a variety of glass sizes and power ratings available, Cuisinequip's extensive range of induction cooking equipment can offer unrivalled versatility and, when perfectly paired with the range of computer fryers available from Valentine Equipment, will help bring any kitchen into the new generation of cooking.

Reflecting on past cook suite projects, including the Great British Restaurant at Dukes Hotel, Murano London and Sugo Glasgow, Steve Elliott commented: "It has been a great pleasure to design and supply bespoke ranges which are as individual as the restaurants themselves. We have been delighted to provide an excellent range of high-quality kitchen equipment to enable these fantastic restaurants to deliver their respective menus".

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Microwave masters

RH Hall has been dominating the microwave market for over 40 years, building an extensive knowledge of this trusted kitchen essential. RH Hall is the UK's largest, most knowledgeable and innovative microwave supplier, stocking only models from leading commercial brands – such as Sharp, the UK's number one, and Maestrowave – having been sole UK distributors for both since 1992.

With the foodservice industry having to quickly adapt to restrictions created by the Covid-19 pandemic, many operators are reviewing their menu offering – perhaps now having a reduced workforce or budget. Microwaves continue to be essential part of any commercial kitchen and the latest technology means today's machines are sophisticated yet easy to use – offering excellent results in a fraction of the time of conventional cooking methods. RH Hall can recommend a solution to help any operation adapt to the new normal.

The affordable but reliable Maestrowave MW10 and MW12 are ideal everyday machines for smaller operators, or perhaps a back-up machine for larger sites that rely on a microwave being available at all times. Also in the Maestrowave range is the award-winning Combi Chef 7, which uses high-speed combination cooking alongside Menu Creator 2.0 software , combining microwave speed with traditional convection to create a 'kitchen in a box', offering outstanding results.

The market-leading range of Sharp microwaves is also available exclusively from RH Hall, in machines from 1000W up to extra-heavy-duty and high-power 1900W, catering for all foodservice applications. The innovative R7500M uses the latest Inverter technology to provide ultra-precise cooking control with perfect results – particularly when defrosting or cooking delicate foods.

Innovation has always been at the forefront of RH Hall and the iWave system is a prime example. Using the latest barcode technology, the system provides a unique, fully encrypted solution suitable for a number of applications – from healthcare to retail vending.

RH Hall has worked closely with a number of NHS sites throughout the pandemic to ensure they are able to offer hot food 24/7. In addition, developments are continuing with leading vending companies as they set up self-service 'Micro Markets', which allow businesses to easily adapt to contact-free, socially distanced staff environments.

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Panasonic accelerates service for operators

When Panasonic's founder, Kōnosuke Matsushita, started the company over 100 years ago, little did he realise how it would flourish under his seven principles of business, and how today it would still be at the forefront of innovation, contributing to society with cutting-edge technology.

Jared Greenhalgh, business development manager at Panasonic UK said: "All those years ago our founder stated one of our principles should be an 'untiring effort for improvement'. Panasonic can proudly look to continue that into the future having gained a number of awards for innovation in recent years and the launch of a microwave world-first.

"Our values and business ethics are still very much at the fore, from the development of new technology to the build quality of our products and the menu development work we do with our customers as part of the after-sales service we offer them."

Panasonic

The latest microwave to shake up the industry is Panasonic's NE-1878; an all-metal door microwave oven with inverter technology.

Designed to suit open kitchens by sporting a full metal door, NE-1878 is faster, better at defrosting, uses less energy and promotes more even, gentler cooking. The new oven boasts the same high build quality that Panasonic is acclaimed for, but by replacing a heavy transformer with the much lighter inverter, (12kg lighter compared to its predecessor), shipping costs are lowered, and it becomes more portable and easier to move for cleaning. The metal door has no ridges, seals or film to clean, and the oven comes with a spare ceiling plate to enable continuous operation, an addition hailed by operators.

According to Independent Grocery Distribution the food-to-go market was set to rise to £23.5b in 2022 among high street retailers and, despite the recent set-back to hospitality with the pandemic, range and innovation development in food continues.

Another of Panasonic's recent product launches offers an affordable solution for operators seeking a high-speed oven that would perform in a busy environment. The SCV-2 Speed Convection Oven does just that and adds a new dimension to the company's existing range of commercial microwaves.

Fitted with a catalytic converter for extraction-free cooking and with two inverters cooled by four fans, the SCV-2 is fast winning favour with operators that are being challenged to produce high-quality food to go, cooked quickly, from a small space.

It's a stackable solution that performs well to not only cook food quickly and evenly, but will crisp and brown too, minimising the need to have several individual items of equipment. Ideal menu items include, hot wraps, paninis, toasted sandwiches, pizzas, pies and pasties.

Panasonic has long been recognised for its build quality and reliability, and for good reason; a professional kitchen can easily achieve more than 200 use cycles per microwave, per day, so the demands are extremely high. Investment in research and product testing to ensure each oven is up to the rigors of a commercial environment is something the company will not compromise on, as the Panasonic brand has always inspired confidence in its consistent performance and dependability.

To find out more about Panasonic's range of commercial microwave ovens, call 01344 862444, email commercial.ovens@eu.panasonic.com or go to panasonic.co.uk/pro-cooking

Panasonic

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Keep your cool

From blast-chilling pre-prepared food to compact drawers that switch from freezer to fridge, refrigeration is the helping hand in the kitchen

Refrigeration is a critical area for caterers and, unlike other equipment, it needs to operate 24 hours a day. From freezers and fridges to display cases and specialist equipment like meat-aging rooms, operators need refrigeration that is reliable, effective and efficient.

Food safety and temperature control have been very much in the spotlight in recent years, but they are even more at the fore with the Covid-19 pandemic. Many foodservice businesses are having to adapt their operations to cope with the pressures of social distancing, reduced staff and changing business hours. One solution is to prepare more food in advance, using a cook-chill or cook-freeze system. For this more fridge and freezer space may be required, along with blast chiller/freezers.

One thing's for sure, being adaptable is going to be more and more important for foodservice operators in the future. That means they need to choose equipment that can keep pace with these changes. For example, some refrigeration products can be switched from fridge to freezer at the touch of a button. That's a great benefit that will help with changing menus or a major shift in operations.

To take account of social distancing, kitchen designers are being asked to create more self-contained chef stations, where individuals will have all the ingredients and cooking appliances they need to hand. Using compact refrigerated drawers can help to provide storage of ingredients right where the chef needs them, helping to reduce touchpoints and movement around the kitchen.

The pandemic has also highlighted the importance of energy efficiency in reducing running costs. Energy labels will help to calculate lifetime costs before purchasing equipment, but you should confirm that what you pick is in the correct climate class for your application – the climate class indicates the conditions the equipment is able to function in. For example, a climate class 3 fridge will work in up to 25°C ambient temperature and 60% relative humidity, whereas a climate class 5 model is up to 40°C ambient temperature and 40% relative humidity.

The importance of the cleaning and maintenance of refrigeration equipment has also been underlined in the 'new normal'. Fridges should be cleaned inside and out regularly, including removing and cleaning shelving, racks and drawers – check with your manufacturer, as these may be OK to run through the dishwasher. On the mechanical side, cleaning the condensers regularly will help ensure the system is running efficiently and thus keep costs down, as well as minimising the need for engineer call-outs.

POLE POSITION

Many manufacturers are adapting technologies pioneered in other industries in order to increase the energy efficiency of their products. Refrigeration is a case in point: some of the latest refrigerated cabinets use concepts based on those used in motor racing to precisely control airflow around the storage area, helping to maintain temperature without expending additional energy. The increased effectiveness of temperature control systems can increase the shelf-life of some foods.

THE DISPLAY TEAM

The boom in coffee shops has fuelled the growth of grab-and-go, making refrigerated display cabinets far more common than they used to be. There has also been an increase in the number of specialist display cabinets for products such as wine, chocolate, meat and cheese. These units often combine temperature and humidity controls to ensure the product is kept at both its ideal temperature and its ideal conditions.

Professionals in the know choose Adande....

(.....don't just take our word for it!)

"Adande is by far the best fridge I have ever bought. I have been using them for 16 years now, ..they're amazing."

Hywel Jones, Executive Head Chef, Lucknam Park Hotel & Spa

"To honour the produce we receive & the work of the farmers & fishermen it's important to have the right refrigeration. Working with Adande we get that. Adande is a fantastic product...you can build a kitchen around them."

Tomos Parry, Co-Owner & Chef BRAT Restaurant

"I have been using Adande for 12 years..they are a great bit of kit. With two drawers at two different temperatures I can deliver the right quality dish for our guests....Adande is definitely a crucial element in that."

Karl Richardson, Executive Head Chef, Waldorf Hilton

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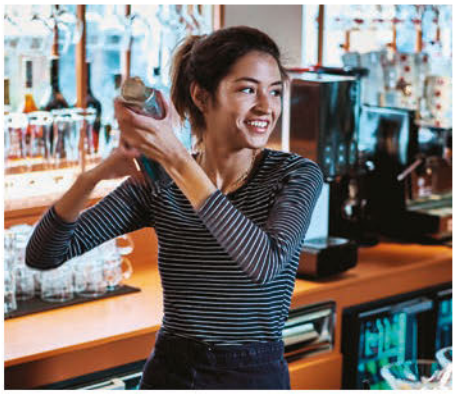

Connectivity: the kitchen revolution

The FEA is working on a global connectivity solution, which has the potential to change the way we manage appliances forever

Connectivity is going to revolutionise the way we run kitchens. It will make them safer, greener and more efficient, and reduce equipment breakdown.

In a Covid-19 world, where it's important to minimise the number of external people coming into the kitchen, connectivity can help. For example, data such as temperature readings, HACCP, energy monitoring, service needs and operational activity can be collected remotely, with no need for anyone to visit. The data can be accessed by operators, manufacturers, service companies and, of course, chefs and the kitchen teams.

So if it's the solution to so many modern foodservice kitchen issues, why isn't everyone using it? One key problem is the need for a common standard for the equipment data that connectivity uses. Typically a connected appliance will have an app or portal that will allow the user to monitor operations, adjust parameters or update programmes remotely. But if a kitchen has 10 connected appliances, each with its own app, then monitoring them all can become impossibly complicated.

What's needed is the ability to provide all the data via one app or portal.

JOINING TOGETHER

The global foodservice industry is working towards a common standard for connectivity and the FEA is chairing the international working party that's investigating potential solutions. The first step is a system that uses a common method for reporting data, so that the app platform can read the information, whatever the appliance that's being monitored.

One system being considered is OPC UA. Several manufacturers have already started incorporating connectivity systems into their products that are compatible with OPC UA, holding out the hope for a common platform. OPC UA protocols have been written for fryers, combi steamers, convection ovens, cooking kettles, multifunction pans, pasta cookers, coffee machines, dishwashers, servery systems, microwave combination ovens and ice machines. Other categories are being worked on.

Ultimately a common standard could mean that the status of appliances of different brands could all be viewed via the same portal, at the same time. However, some experts are sceptical, pointing out that OPC UA doesn't answer all the questions. For example, it can't monitor kitchen conditions such as humidity levels.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

But what about older, 'dumb' appliances that don't have connectivity built in? Can they join the connected kitchen revolution? Yes, they can. Some manufacturers are developing systems that use a variety of sensors that can send data to a compatible platform via an app on a smartphone or tablet, or a portal via a PC. The sensors can be fitted to 'unconnected' appliances in order to bring them online.

There are different sensors for different types of equipment, and they can all feed data into the same platform. So appliances as varied as coffee machines, foodservice counters, merchandisers and fryers can be connected, and supply temperature readings, HACCP logs and so on. These too could be to the OPC UA standard.

In the future every commercial kitchen will be connected. Developments like OPC UA are bringing that future closer, step by step.

If you're interested in finding out more about kitchen connectivity, watch out for the FEA webinar on the subject in 2021. To register your interest, email your contact information to enquiries@fea.org.uk, putting 'Connectivity Webinar' in the subject line

Test and protect

It's always been important to regularly service your kitchen equipment, but breakdowns during the new normal could be devasting

Making sure your kitchen equipment doesn't break down is more important than ever in a Covid-19 world. Many kitchens are running with fewer staff – so if, say, the dishwasher stops working, there's less capacity for humans to step in and wash the dirties.

At the same time, doing work by hand, whether that's washing dishes or prepping vegetables, is not only going to be slower but also, quite possibly, less hygienic. Plus it's a downer for staff morale and, at a time when you want to encourage repeat business as much as possible, any equipment downtime is bound to affect customer service. And, of course, equipment breakdown is going to cost you money.

So, it's best to do everything possible to keep equipment working safely, efficiently and hygienically, which is where regular servicing and maintenance come in. Make sure all your equipment is covered by a service contract. Ideally, get what's called a PPM – Planned Preventative Maintenance. The engineer will come out once or twice a year, more often if you're a very busy site, and give equipment a thorough health check. They'll adjust operating parameters as required to make sure everything is operating at optimum efficiency. They can often tell if a component is likely to fail in the near future, and fix it before it causes a problem. They may give you an MOT-style checklist showing you potential issues.

The bottom line: a PPM is the best way to minimise the risk of equipment failure.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a big impact on how service is provided. It's important to minimise the number of people in the kitchen at any one time, so check that your service provider can arrange for engineers to schedule their visits for when the kitchen is closed. You should provide clear guidance to any visitors in respect of your protocols on social distancing, hygiene requirements, etc, before they arrive.

TAKE IT DAY BY DAY

Together with a professional service contract, there's another side to looking after equipment: the day-to-day maintenance that staff need to carry out. It's absolutely essential that they are trained to clean and look after equipment and that they respond immediately to any issues – especially if the machine has self-diagnostics and it is flagging up a problem – don't ignore it! Manufacturers and distributors often offer training on day-to-day maintenance, so take advantage of it. Many also offer videos and other training resources that can be easily accessed online.

For a holistic view on how commercial kitchens operate, FEA runs the Certified Food Service Professional (CFSP) course, which is aimed at both operators and equipment suppliers. For information, visit www.cfsp.org.uk.

MOTHBALLING AND RECOMMISSIONING

In these strange times kitchens have had to be shut down for extended periods and then reopened. However, equipment needs to be looked after at both ends of the process, so FEA have put together two guides, one on mothballing equipment and one on recommissioning.

In addition, the association has put together a guide on Covid-19 and best kitchen practice. All three are available as free downloads from the coronavirus section on the FEA website.

BEAT THE BREAKDOWN

WHY PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE MAKES SENSE

Ensuring equipment such as coffee machines and combi ovens are working efficiently is essential for the smooth running of any establishment in the hospitality industry. Unreliable machinery can pose a real threat to the efficiency of operations, potentially giving businesses no choice but to invest in costly repairs or replace equipment entirely.

In research conducted by BRITA Professional 50% of professional kitchen staff revealed that replacing equipment would be a significant cost to their business.

As a result, and perhaps due to the financial pressures of the last year, one third of kitchen staff and baristas are currently being more cautious with equipment to avoid costly breakdowns.

50%

OF PROFESSIONAL KITCHEN STAFF SAY REPLACING EQUIPMENT WOULD BE A SIGNIFICANT COST TO THE BUSINESS

1/5

OF HOT BEVERAGE STAFF SAY BROKEN EQUIPMENT WOULD CAUSE STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE

The drive to Prevent Don't Repair

The key to beating breakdowns is to put the right preventative maintenance in place, to guarantee the lifespan of equipment. Such an approach will ultimately save time, money and ensure operational efficiency as well as having an impact on equipment sustainability.

BRITA Professional's research found one in five professional kitchen outlets have recently introduced preventative maintenance to ensure their machinery continues to operate at a high rate of efficiency.

Life is better filtered

On equipment that uses water, such as combi ovens and coffee machines, one of the most effective ways to prevent premature breakdowns is by using the correct water filter and exchanging it on time. This can help eliminate damage and inefficiency over time caused by the build-up of limescale.

Preventative maintenance such as descaling and deep cleaning will also help improve equipment performance. A combi oven for example, which utilises water, needs to be regularly maintained to prevent limescale build-up. If it isn't looked after and serviced regularly there may well be problems with the overall usage, multi-functions, self-cleaning and humidity.

Let BRITA do the hard work

While 'Prevent Don't Repair' makes financial sense, operators need to be mindful of taking a DIY approach. BRITA's research shows over a quarter of professionals (26%) wouldn't be able to easily spot a problem on equipment.

Using BRITA Managed Services can relieve the pressure by supporting operators with preventative maintenance. By offering advice and carrying out essential filter exchanges, operators can rely on their equipment to deliver a smooth service when they need it most. BRITA offers a range of services tailored to individual needs which will prolong the life of equipment, giving operators vital peace of mind.

For more information on BRITA Managed Services please visit:
www.brita.co.uk/managed-services

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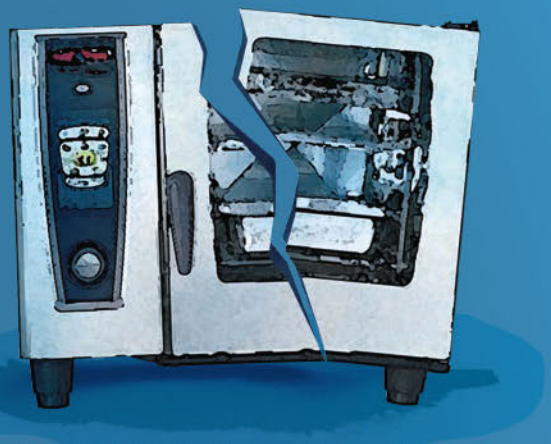
By letting BRITA take care of your water filtration you can rest assured that expensive repairs and equipment breakdowns due to limescale build up are a concern of the past.



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Whether you're new to BRITA or an existing user, **contact us today** to find out how BRITA Managed Services can help your business save time and money. **Call 01869 365851** or **visit www.brita.co.uk/managed-services**

SHUTTERSTOCK

Clean and clear

The need for increased hygiene in a post-Covid-19 world is obvious, but there are solutions within your kitchen to make implementation easier

If there's one thing that Covid-19 has taught the UK, it's the usefulness and potential of digital technology. How many people have learned how to use Zoom this year?

In commercial kitchens, the pandemic has had a huge impact on HACCP, with entirely new risks and hazards, such as the need to socially distance. As foodservice operations introduce protocols to minimise the number of visitors to the kitchen and to avoid touchpoints, digital technology is coming into its own.

Connectivity, in the widest sense of the word, is key here. Not just 'connected' appliances but also, for example, temperature monitoring systems that connect in a variety of ways. In the servicing section of this guide we've looked at how connectivity can minimise downtime. By avoiding equipment breakdown, it also reduces the need for visitors (such as engineers) to come to the kitchen.

Similarly, temperature monitoring systems, with sensors that send operational data from fridges and other appliances to a central computer or digital device such as a smartphone, mean there's no need for staff to go round the kitchen touching equipment in order to check temperatures and operational status. It can all be done automatically and non-kitchen staff can check the data remotely. If there is a problem, the system will call it to their attention – and the attention of other members of the team, such as service providers.

The FEA's *Guide to Covid-19 Best Kitchen Practice* looks in detail at how the pandemic has impacted operations and HACCP, offering advice and guidance. It looks at how kitchens can minimise the number of visitors they have – for example, by scheduling service calls overnight, when no staff are working.

Operators need to look at their kitchen layout, too. Along with initiatives like one-way systems, they need, where possible, to create work stations where chefs can prepare food safely, socially distanced from their colleagues.

INNOVATION THROUGH CRISIS

Lots of suppliers are now offering alternative ways and products to enhance hygiene. For example, it's a good idea to install germicidal UVC lamps, as used to eradicate Sars, and automated fogging devices that sanitise surfaces are increasingly available in foodservice, having become established in healthcare.

In fact, suppliers and manufacturers moved very quickly to develop products that could help operators tackle the hazards created by Covid-19. From foot-operated and 'magic eye' hand sanitiser dispensers to mobile, roll-up screens that can be positioned to create protective bubbles, new solutions are appearing daily. The *Guide to Covid-19 Best Kitchen Practice* is available to download from the coronavirus section of the FEA website.

EXPLOITING MODERN EQUIPMENT

If your kitchen has programmable appliances such as combi ovens, exploit their ability to operate without supervision. As well as reducing the number of staff, this will reduce touchpoints and free up staff for other tasks.

Similarly, appliances with self-cleaning functions will not only reduce touchpoints, they'll also usually do a better job than a manual clean can accomplish. Plus, staff won't have to do this time-consuming and often unpleasant task at the end of the shift – so the kitchen will be happier, as well as more hygienic.

A Cinderella story

Warewashing is an oft-neglected equipment area, but finding the most efficient technologies can make your kitchen run like a fairytale

Warewashing is the Cinderella of the kitchen: it doesn't get the focus that other, sexier areas like prime cooking receive, but if you're trying to maximise efficiency and push down costs, you need to make sure that your dishwashers, glass washers and utensil washers are just as efficient and up to date as the other appliances in your kitchen.

GOING GREEN

Different manufacturers have come up with different ways to reduce running costs and make their products greener. A key point is that a water-saving feature doesn't just save H2O; it also saves energy (most of the energy used in a warewasher is to heat the water), plus, less water means fewer chemicals. So look for things like smaller wash tanks, sophisticated wash arms and rinsing systems, and ultra-efficient filtration systems. Heat exchangers will save energy, too.

Some warewashers are getting very clever – they recycle heat not only from waste water and steam, but also pull in hot air from the kitchen. Then they heat up the water supply, and also pump cool, dry fresh air back into the kitchen.

GET INNOVATIVE

Can a warewasher be multifunctional? Recent innovations include two-in-one machines, with two warewashers built into one space-saving unit.

During the periods of national lockdown, lots of restaurants and pubs switched from eat-ins to takeaways, which meant they had fewer dishes to wash, but more pots, pans and utensils. During the first UK-wide lockdown, operators in the know called in their warewasher engineer and got them to tweak the machine's washing parameters (temperature, water pressure and so forth) so that instead of washing dishes, it could be used to wash pots and pans.

In fact there's been a growing demand for utensil washers, and the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to increase that. Why? Because utensil washers are quicker and more effective than a human being standing at a sink doing what's essentially a horrible job. A utensil washer will be more hygienic, cheaper (in the long run) and it won't throw the scourer down and walk out when the baked-on dirt just gets too much. With kitchens running on fewer staff, equipment like utensil washers will become ever more important.

Good practice during Covid-19, to minimise the risk of contamination, is to have just one person running the warewasher, if possible. They should ensure that they wash or sanitise their hands between loading machines or racks with dirties and then unloading the cleaned ware.

You also need to consider the storing of clean dishes and glasses. Leaving them in the open for any length of time is a risk, so ideally they need to be shut away somewhere safe. If you don't have the facility, then consider running clean ware that's been left in the open through the dishwasher or glass washer again before you use it to serve.

BACK ON RACK

The right rack can make a huge difference to how well your machine washes. There are now loads of different rack configurations, so that you can find the best one for your ware.

As tableware and glassware manufacturers produce more weird and wonderful designs – over-sized plates, extra-long stemmed glasses and so on – it pays to find the right rack, which will both ensure the ware gets washed properly and protect it throughout the entire wash cycle.

Is hygiene the new benchmark?

Before 2020 it was safe to say that kitchen equipment was purchased based on price, quality, efficiency, technical support and, over the last few years, sustainability has come much higher in the equation.

With the advent of Covid-19 and in the eyes of the diner, a new factor was forced into the mix: "Is this plate, cutlery and glass safe to eat from?"

At Meiko we knew our warewashing was safe and that our machines are developed on the basis of giving the very best and most hygienic wash... so we had them tested and certified to prove the point, giving our customers assurance and complete peace of mind.

To help even further we produced a window sticker for our customers to show their diners that, with regards to warewashing, they are at a safe place to eat and drink

... BUT CAN I AFFORD THE BEST HYGIENE?

From Meiko's perspective, the highest level of hygiene is built into all our machines as standard, from the entry-level new UPster series to our Premium M-iClean range, so yes, especially in the times we're living in, you can afford the hygiene you need.

MEIKO
The clean solution

DON'T FORGET THE WHOLE PACKAGE

Hygiene doesn't necessarily need to be the new and only benchmark, it should be a given that your dishwasher will keep your diners safe, so when making your purchase decision you should look at the whole package: the very best value for money, with the very best level of service and support and a machine that will be the very best for the health of the planet.

That's where Meiko comes in, with over 90 years in the business of designing and developing warewashers and food waste handling equipment, we set the benchmarks for others to follow. You know for sure you are getting the very best: reliability, sustainability, ergonomics, hygiene and efficiencies... backed up with award-winning customer support.

With extended warranties, fixed-price preventative maintenance, the highest first-time fix rates and response to your breakdown calls within eight working hours... there is only one winner.

Remember, the true cost of dishwashing equipment is only accurately assessed over the lifetime of the machine.

To find out how serious we are about warewashing and how we can help your business, visit www.meiko-uk.co.uk

Professional Warewashing Technology

MEIKO
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Designed for the hygiene needs of a new world

HYGIENE
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Whether it's washing crockery, cutlery, glassware or the removal and recycling of food waste, MEIKO UK sets the new benchmark for hygiene, value for money and breakdown repair and service!

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01825 765511
www.mitchellcooper.co.uk
MKN
00 49 533 189 208
www.mkn.eu/cms/mkn/de/intro.html
MOBILE UK
01706 868160
www.mukl.com
MONIKA
01664 420022
www.monika.com
MONTGOMERY GROUP
020 7886 3100
www.montgomerygroup.com
NELSON CATERING EQUIPMENT
08007 313045
www.nelsoncatering.co.uk
NEVILLE UK PLC
01322 443143
www.nevilleuk.com
NISBETS
08451 110281
www.nisbets.com
NORTHERN CATERING EQUIPMENT
01138 087770
www.northerncatering.co.uk
NOVAMETA UAB
07918 740027
novameta.co.uk
OXFORD HARDWARE
01295 680068
http://oxfordhardware.co.uk
OZTIRYAKILER
+90 (212) 886 7810
www.oztiryakiler.com.tr
PANASONIC UK
01344 853349
www.panasonic.co.uk/pro-cooking
PARRY CATERING EQUIPMENT (MIDLANDS)
01332 875544
www.parry.co.uk
PKL GROUP UK (LOWE RENTAL)
01242 663000
www.pkl.co.uk
PLASMA CLEAN
01614 434125
www.plasma-clean.com
PRECISION REFRIGERATION
01842 753994
www.precision-refrigeration.com
PRICE EXPRESS TRANSPORT
01142 900500
www.pricetransport.co.uk
PRO FOODSERVICE REPS
01162 598070
www.profoodservice reps.co.uk
PROJECT DISTRIBUTION
01782 280289
www.project-distribution.co.uk
PROMART MANUFACTURING
01515 474666
www.promart.co.uk
PURIFIED AIR
01708 755414
www.purifiedair.com
QUINTEX SYSTEMS
01189 739310
www.quintex.co.uk
RAMCO
01754 880880
www.ramcofood services.co.uk
RATIONAL
01582 480388
www.rational-online.com
RECO-AIR
03333 052978
www.reco-air.com
REGALE MICROWAVE OVENS
01329 285518
www.regale.co.uk
RH HALL
01296 663400
www.rhhall.com
ROBOT COUPE
020 8232 1800
www.robot-coupe.com/en-uk/
ROLLER GRILL
08451 252545
rollergrill.co.uk
SJH ROW & SONS
01206 396688
www.sjh-row.co.uk
S&S NORTHERN
01257 470983
www.snsnorthern.com
SAMMIC
01162 461900
www.sammic.com
SERVICELINE
01438 363000
service-line.co.uk
SHINE
01633 294800
www.shine.co.uk
SHIRE LEASING
01827 302066
www.shireleasing.co.uk
SIGNATURE FSE
01634 931055
www.signature-fse.com
SMEG
08445 731370
www.smegfood service.com
SOCAMEL
01249 811396
www.socameluk.co.uk
SOUS VIDE TOOLS
01524 770060
www.sousvidetools.com
SOUTH COAST CATERING EQUIPMENT
01323 444530
www.southcoast catering.co.uk
SOUTH EAST CATERING SERVICES
020 8294 0695
www.southeastcatering.co.uk
SOUTHERN CATERING EQUIPMENT
01983 756628
www.southerncatering.co.uk
SPACE CATERING
01452 383000
www.spacecatering.co.uk
SPECIFI EUROPE SRL
+39 042 282 3977
specifiglobal.com
SPRINGBOARD
020 7921 0420
www.springboard.uk.net
STV INTERNATIONAL
01953 881580
www.stvpestcontrol.com
SYNERGY GRILL TECHNOLOGY
01480 811000
synergygrill.com
T&G WOODWARE
0127 5841841
www.tg-woodware.com
TABLECRAFT
01536 400091
www.tablecraft.com
TARGET CATERING EQUIPMENT
01452 410447
www.targetcatering.co.uk
TEK-TRONIKS
01159 890090
www.tek-troniks.com
TFSE PRODUCTS
08455 007100
www.tfse.eu
THE AIREDALE GROUP
01274 626666
www.airedale-group.co.uk
THE CATERER
020 7881 4802
www.thecaterer.com
THE CUTLERY POLISHER
08452 571969
www.thecutlerypolisher.co.uk
THE DENBY POTTERY CO
01773 740700
www.denbypottery.com
THE STAFF CANTEEN
03302 021050
www.thestaffcanteen.com
THUNDER GROUP
01142 311943
www.thundergroupuk.com
TOURNUS EQUIPEMENT
+33 (0) 385 274 272
www.tournus.com
TRAK SYSTEMS
01515 491010
trak-catering.com
TRUE REFRIGERATION
01709 888888
www.truemfg.com
UL INTERNATIONAL GERMANY GMBH
69 489810 253
www.ul.com
VALENTINE EQUIPMENT – CUISINEEQUIP
01189 571344
www.valentinefryers.com
VICTOR MANUFACTURING
01274 722125
www.victoronline.co.uk
VIESSMANN REFRIGERATION SYSTEMS
01952 457157
cooling.viessmann.co.uk
WATHEN MARINE CATERING EQUIPMENT SERVICE
01794 515731
www.wathenmarine.com
WELBILT
01483 464900
www.welbilt.uk
WESSEX CATERING MAINTENANCE
01747 850735
www.wessexgroup.co.uk
WEXIODISK
07968 558389
www.wexiodisk.com/en
WILLIAMS REFRIGERATION
01553 817000
www.williams-refrigeration.co.uk
WINTERHALTER
01908 359000
www.winterhalter.co.uk
ZODIAC STAINLESS PRODUCTS CO
01214 727206
www.zodiacspco.co.uk

FEA Foodservice Equipment Association

Information Involvement Influence

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