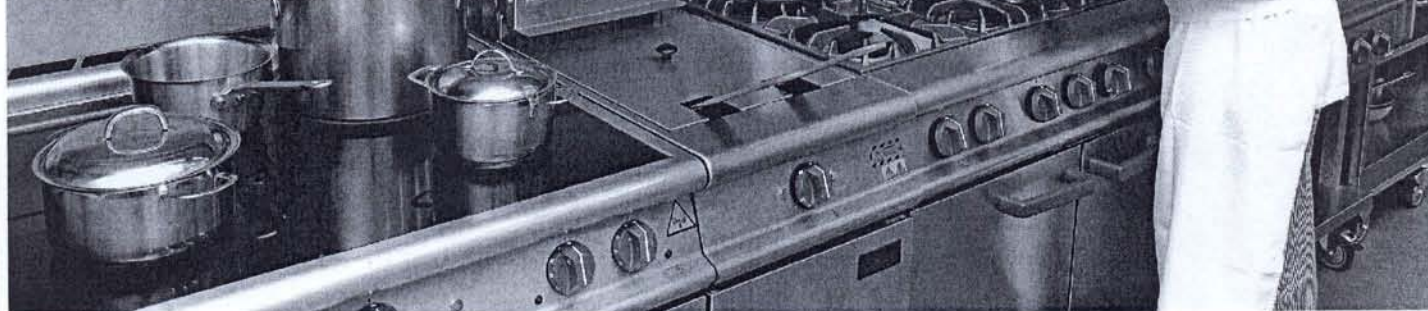


Check your kit is up to scratch



With the Christmas season fast approaching, **Andrew Don** asks the experts for advice on ensuring fryers and ovens are up to the task

It is your busiest week for office parties, business lunches and old colleagues meeting for their annual pre-Christmas lunch.

Your pub restaurant is booked to capacity and you are relishing a nice little earner.

You have booked in extra staff. You've made all the necessary preparations and you feel confident nothing can go wrong.

Then you switch on your oven and fryers. Nothing. Dead.

When was the last time you did a maintenance check? A what? You start to perspire.

Then you wake up. Phew!

Thanking whatever deity you believe in, you com-

mit to either servicing your equipment before the rush starts or buying new equipment.

As Paul Hickman, Lincat development chef, points out: "Cars run more efficiently and are less likely to let you down if they are serviced regularly. The same is true for ovens and fryers."

Sol Goodall, managing director of Olive Services, the London hospitality maintenance company, says now

“Cars are less likely to let you down if they are serviced regularly. The same is true for ovens and fryers

is the time for publicans to check their ovens and fryers are up to the job.

"Imagine a breakdown during a Christmas work party celebration at your pub. The chaos, the last-minute menu changes, the damage to reputation and future custom, all caused by a fryer breakdown that could have been avoided," he says.

Now is the time to implement a thorough cleaning regime and

Keeping the barbie burning

Red Dog Restaurants, which has a branch in Hoxton Square, north London, called Red Dog Saloon, and one in Clapham North, south-west London, called Red Dog South, includes many products on its menu that are cooked for long periods at low heat.

Operations manager Ivan Squillace says that even a short breakdown can result in the waste of a large amount of expensive products: ribs, pork shoulders and briskets, for example.

The business has an annual turnover of £4m to £5m, taking about 3,000 covers a week, with an average spend of



Well-oiled partnership: Sol Goodall

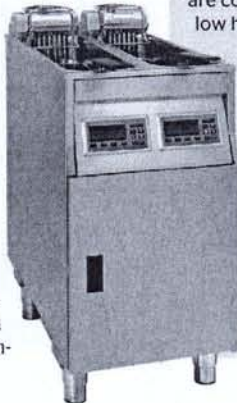
£26 a head – a lot of business to lose. That is why Red Dog Restaurants works with Olive Services to provide a planned preventative approach to maintain all key equipment including fryers and ovens.

"Any breakdowns would greatly impact on our business, especially over the Christmas period,

Squillace says. Falcon Foodservice's development chef, Neil Roseweir, says it would be prudent to have fryers and ovens at least calibrated to ensure the temperature set will be maintained during cooking.

"Now is the time to ensure that the menu does not overload either piece of equipment, if it does, now is also the time to purchase an extra piece of equipment to fit into the kitchen. If there is no room then change the menu accordingly, he says.

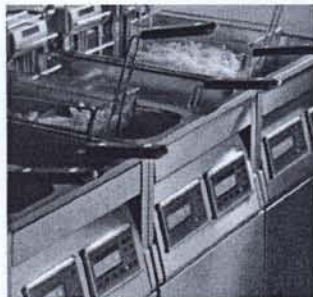
"Do not overload the equipment or you may regret this decision in, not only financial repair costs, but also in lost revenue and customer confidence. Planning is everything."



Ensuring peace of mind



Well kept: Cleanliness is crucial



ensure it is adhered to, he advises. "If your unit is more than eight years old, check that spare parts are still available from the manufacturer in the UK on a quick response and, if not, consider replacing the unit."

Check, clean and correct

Nick Pendlebury, managing director of Pantheon and Monarch, says cleanliness is the biggest problem.

"After a full year's use, injectors and burners may be blocked and control valves may be stiff due to the intense heat and drying of the mechanism. All these should be checked, cleaned and corrected."

Pendlebury advises an annual deep clean and service to see them through Christmas and New Year.



No risk: the Cherry Tree has a pre-Christmas check on its equipment

Tom Taylor and his family, who bought the Cherry Tree in Blackrod, Bolton, four years ago earn 80% of their income from dry sales, although they insist the bar is still important to the local community.

When Pantheon's parent company Monarch designed and installed the kitchen, it included a CO3 convection oven and a twin fryer. "As part of its ongoing

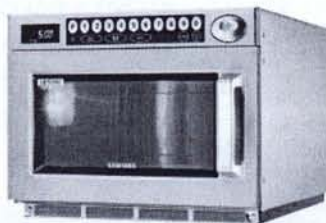
support package, Monarch and Pantheon provide a pre-Christmas check and service across all equipment. It's a brilliant idea that gives me complete peace of mind over this crazy period, during which our weekly covers leap from around 1,100 to 2,500. It's not a time to take risks," Taylor says. He adds a reliable kitchen is "absolutely vital" for a successful operation.

"At Christmas, getting a service engineer is near impossible, and without vital appliances, hundreds of pounds can be lost. Pantheon strongly recommends a service prior to the start of the Christmas period."

FRIMA UK managing director Graham Kille believes that if units are regularly cleaned and maintained, there should be no need for further testing. "We offer a choice of equipment that has automatic monitoring for ease of use and safety. Work with companies that

are happy to provide on-site training and support," he says.

Some combi ovens, such as Alto-Shaam's range, which



Foodservice Equipment Marketing (FEM) distributes, has a self-cleaning programme. FEM marketing and sales manager, Mark Hogan, says: "All

the operator has to

do is load the cleanser, set the cycle and the combi does the rest."

He adds that prior to big events, such as Christmas, it is important to get staff to keep an eye on how equipment is working and make note of any concerns. These can then be addressed with supplier or service provider.

"Simple checks can save costly downtime. They include checking that all door seals are intact, that thermostats are accurate, ventilation is unobstructed and in good working order, and that any alerts or error messages are acted upon," Hogan says.

He adds: "When buying equipment, choose a reputable brand and check it carries all the relevant kite marks. Make sure that spare parts are readily available and that there is an after-sales service."

Let the oven do the work: FRIMA has equipment that cleans itself



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