



Multi task **force**

Bakers, under pressure to improve efficiency, are turning from deck and rack ovens to multi-functional combi models, finds Andrew Don

KICK OFF YOUR SHOES and turn on the TV while your bakery machinery makes you money. Believe it or not, this really could be the case soon.

Research and development gurus at Valera, supplier of the Fagor range of combi ovens, are currently working on technology to enable remote operation and say the development could be as little as six months away. Kurran Gadhvi, marketing manager at Valera, says: "With the next generation of bakers coming through, it is these kind of things that appeal to people and make a difference."

A combi oven, much like a multifunctional modern music system, will enable you to use one piece of equipment to do a variety of jobs.

Simon Lilley, hot products category manager at Electrolux Professional, which manufactures the air-o-steam Touchline, including touchscreen panel, which can be programmed for specific recipes, says the multifunctional aspect is crucial when a wide variety of goods are made each day. A combi oven enables bakers to be experimental. It does not just simplify cooking, but can also save money on energy costs and reduce climate impact, Lilley says.

Paul Hickman, development chef at Lincat, says combi ovens are an ideal choice for traditional baked goods. "They are also ideal for bake-off applications, since they have the ability to add moisture into the baking process, resulting in a perfect glazed finish for bread and pastries. Baking processes can also be stored for repeatable quality and consistency," Hickman says.

Combis can open up a whole new range of options for even the smallest of businesses and can work continuously to cook meat overnight, for example, and hold it in perfect condition until needed in the morning, perhaps for sandwich-making, or pasty fillings.

Buying tips

- ◆ Look at functionality. If you are just baking and not steaming or regenerating, then buy a convection oven.
 - ◆ Consider the strength of the brand
 - ◆ Assess the back-up service and the warranty
 - ◆ Check whether training is provided by the supplier
 - ◆ Look at ease of cleaning
 - ◆ If a gas combi oven, ensure the connection is correct and, if electric, make sure you've got three-phase and not single-phase
- Source: Valera

New products

RATIONAL TAKES CARE

Rational has launched its SelfCookingCenter 5 Senses, a combi it says is "the first intelligent commercial appliance that interacts with bakers".

Lee Norton, managing director of Rational UK, says the machine gets to know the way bakers work. It features an upgraded automatic cleaning system called Efficient CareControl, which uses reformulated cleaning tablets that Norton says last 50% longer than previous versions.



MINI STYLE FROM ELECTROLUX

Electrolux Professional has a new Mini Combi oven which can be plugged in anywhere. The company says the machine is versatile with maximum steam for foods usually cooked in water, low temperature steam for slow, even cooking, combi-cooking for a combination of hot air and steam, and convection which is commonly used for desserts and biscuits. It has just four settings: cooking mode, temperature, ventilation and time. It also has a range of internal accessories and containers for different cooking requirements.



LINCAT'S BAKER'S DOZEN

Lincat has introduced the Opus SelfCooking Center 5 Senses which features 13 Intelligent Cooking Control processes, including choux pastry, bread and rolls, as well as five levels of proving and three levels of steam baking.



MANITOWOC GOES PRO

Manitowoc has unveiled its Convotherm 4 which incorporates the new Bake Pro function. Martin Behle, general manager of Convotherm and Merrychef at the company, says the programme is similar to those found in traditional baking ovens and provides a determined amount of water injected prior to baking, plus a resting period.



THREE'S COMPANY AT INOXTEC

Inoxtec, of Italy, is targeting the UK for the first time with its three ranges of combi ovens: Basic which comes in two versions and Plus and Professional, which both come in three versions.

Hickman says because a combi can prove and bake, it saves space, time and money. "Without it a baker would need a prover and an oven."

Valera's Gadhvi, adds that in a combi steam oven, bakers have the advantage of the steam as well as the convection and regeneration depending on the product they are preparing. It also facilitates bulk cooking and he claims they are easy to use.

Buying advice

Electrolux says an experienced baker might benefit from a manually operated machine, which facilitates a hands-on approach, whereas if the user is less skilled or in a kitchen requiring a degree of automation, it might be best to invest in an oven that can be pre-programmed.

Lilley says: "The main benefit of a programmable combi oven is that the finest pastries can be prepared by someone who recently joined the business." However, he says modern manual combis are much simpler to operate than they used to be and the

temperature and humidity functions are now more accurate and easier to control.

Paul Godfrey, cooking product manager UK at Hobart, advises that not all combis take 600mm x 400mm bakery-size trays so bakers might have to buy different size trays. And he notes that they have boilers and direct spray systems so a floor drain is needed on the side, which can be a downside for some people. Water treatment, too, is necessary in hard water areas.

These aspects, aside, Godfrey says combi ovens reduce cooking time by a third, although not so much with pastry, but "you will get a better rise, or better product out of it compared with a traditional deck oven". Godfrey advises that any independent baker wanting to adapt to the marketplace and future-proof their business should look at a combi that gives versatility and flexibility.

Martin Behle, general manager of Convotherm and Merrychef at Manitowoc, says: "We strongly believe

Case study: Fait Maison

Fait Maison, a London-based bakery and restaurant chain, comprises Fait Maison, which offers bakery, restaurant and event catering, and Blanche Eatery, for take-away, deli and lunch catering.

The firm has bought a new SelfCookingCenter from Rational which it uses for a wide range of products, from scones, pastries and pies to steaks and roasts. Mohamed Osman, managing director, says the new Rational is "brilliant" at cooking everything to the same consistency, whether salmon steaks or croissants. "The croissants come out about 20% bigger from the Rational than from our old ovens, so not only are they better, but we also need less dough per portion."

Rational says this is because of a new feature called HiDensityControl which ensures complete consistency throughout the cabinet.



Case study: Ann's Pasties

Cornish retailer and wholesaler Ann's Pasties got a "special deal" on a Fagor Advanced Plus and Fagor Advanced combi oven from Valera less than a year ago.

Pasty maker Fergus Muller praised the programmability. "We use them for pasties and they cook far superior to anything else. We also do buns and sausage rolls. Sometimes we need all the functions, such as when we cook off from frozen to regenerate pasties and we look to use more steam when we par-bake."

Ann's, which has a shop in Helston and Lizard, sometimes sublets the kitchens for events, so all the functions are used. "Both are 10-grid, but as we grow we will probably get a 20-grid," says Muller.



that combi ovens are the new trend for baking but it is important [to note] that not all combi ovens will serve this segment. We strongly recommend operators check the evenness of airflow in full load, and check for the traditional baking functionality. If this is provided, customers will have a real future-proof solution."