

Hot propositions

Choosing the very latest oven or fryer should be straightforward, but unwary types risk getting their fingers burned, cautions **Andrew Don**

Keeping a fry profile

Outlet: the Pint Shop
Location: Cambridge
USP: The bar has 16 draught ales, mostly from small British craft brewers, along with a few European and American ones. There are 50 (mainly British) gins and 30-odd whiskies.
Covers: 1,000 per week
Menu: Simple British fare focused on charcoal grilling and spit-roasting
Most popular food: Beef short ribs and steak
Equipment: Four Mareno fryers; Rational combi oven
Cost: £7,500 (oven) and £2,000 in total for the fryers
Suitability: Director Benny Peverelli says: "I chose Rational as I've used its equipment before and found it is the best – both user-friendly and self-cleaning. It gets a hammering and a lot of use. The fryers, meanwhile, were recommended to us and are right for our output."



Chefs are faced with a mind-blowing choice of fryers and ovens nowadays, so taking the time to choose the right one is vital to the success of your operation.

There is no shortage of respected brands in the marketplace – including Falcon, Rational, Hobart, Lincat, Manitowoc and Valentine – so all that remains is to narrow down the options and plump for the best one.

There is also specialist equipment to consider depending on the menu and pub chef's needs. If pizza is a speciality, operators should check out the experts in that field, such as Linda Lewis Kitchens,



which focuses on suitable equipment for all sizes of establishments.

Peter Kay, technical support director at the Catering Equipment Distributors' Association (CEDA), stresses the need to consider the venue's output, the demands placed on the equipment, power facilities and available space.

Keith Warren, director of the Catering Equipment Suppliers' Association, adds: "With ovens and ranges, there's a choice of light, medium and heavy-duty models – it's very important to ensure that the one you choose is big enough for your needs."

Before buying, chefs should have an idea of what they want, know the pitfalls to avoid, and understand the maintenance and training requirements.

Pitfalls to watch out for

A classic mistake is made by chefs who buy equipment that dwarfs the premises. CEDA's Kay says: "The number of times I've seen six-burner ranges that can't fit through the door – this tends to happen at the smaller end of the market where they see what they think is

Oven buying tips

- Decide between gas, electricity or dual fuel.
- Buy a model suited to your kitchen's power supply.
- Gas products are legally required to be positioned under powered extraction canopies fitted with an interlock, which adds to installation costs.
- Electric products are generally cheaper, but ongoing energy costs are often lower with gas.
- Electric convection ovens generally offer more even heat distribution.
- Freestanding modular equipment means you can move things around if you decide another layout would work better, and makes for easier cleaning.
- Check ease of use and operational safety. Make use of a reputable manufacturer that meets stringent European safety regulations.

Source: Lincat

Making a Rational decision

Outlet: the George & Dragon
Location: Graveley, Herts
Owner: Jason Kingsbury
Head chef: Sam Robinson
Covers: 600 a week
Dry GP: 65%
Most popular food: Sunday roasts, home-made chicken burgers, fish, lemon curd sponge, white and dark chocolate brownie
Equipment: Rational SelfCookingCenter white efficiency combi oven (six-grid electric)
Cost: £8,420

Suitability: "It gives us what we need – consistent quality – even if I'm not doing the cooking, thanks to the programmable controls," says Robinson. "Rational gives great after-sales support and a two-year warranty – it will pay for itself easily within two years. It is particularly suited to our venue, which produces fresh, simple, seasonal food. The machine is ideal, it's like having an extra chef or two because of the workload it can handle."



the ideal product and buy it on the internet because they find it at a competitive price."

Rachel Smith, marketing manager of Lincat, says chefs should not expect a light counter-top item to withstand heavy use and neither should they pay thousands of pounds for heavy-duty kit if they are working in a small outlet. In addition, buyers ought to see the purchase as an investment and not be swayed by price.



Maintenance and training

Whatever the size of unit, you will be parting with a fair chunk of cash, so it is important to get the most out of the purchase.

There will be maintenance and training involved, so staff must know how to use – and look after – fryers and ovens properly.

Choose a manufacturer that offers a follow-up training programme and one that can be trusted to come out

and help when needed.

Rational offers a complete package of menu development support, free demonstrations and training sessions where chefs can learn about the latest combi-cooking techniques. The company's development chefs will work with the customer's kitchen team to find the best way to cook a variety of recipes, which can then be programmed into the Self-CookingCenter white efficiency.

Chipping in to meet demand

Outlet: Minnis Bar & Restaurant

Location: Birchington, Kent

Chef-patron: Jason Freedman

USP: Beachside property

Covers: 1,000 a week

Dry GP: 63%

Most popular food: Fish and chips served in Gadd's ale batter with a mushy pea mayonnaise

Equipment: Three Charvet high-powered 12kW-rated three-phase single-tank fryers

Distributor: QSP Food Solutions

Features: The fryers hold 14 litres of oil each

Cost: About £5,000 each

Suitability: "They are stunning, practical cooking appliances," says Freedman. "They're perfect for us as we have a huge output of fresh fish and home-made chips throughout the year, with a massive surge of business in the summer. They are very controllable and can hold eight fillets of fish each. They cook them consistently to perfection and are easy to clean."



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