



Proving their worth

Retarder-prover suppliers continue to tweak their products in a sub-sector that boosts convenience and efficiency. Andrew Don reports

THE BEST RETARDER-PROVERS

are able to keep running if a component fails, just like a computer with RAID that keeps the system going when a hard disk dies.

That is one of the aspects that attracted Tony Jenkins, owner of Hampshire craft firm Soothills Bakery, to equipment manufacturer KOMA. Jenkins, who has one outlet in Fareham, Hampshire and another at Locks Heath Shopping Village, says what he appreciates about KOMA retarder-provers is that if, for example, a fan fails, another fan compensates until the engineer arrives, so the unit still works.

KOMA UK sales manager Kent Sunderland explains that the inbuilt Teleguard 24-7 diagnostic monitoring system will know a fan has failed before the customer has any idea, and an engineer will be quickly dispatched to the site with

the correct spare part so that production is not adversely affected. Jenkins, who installed his second KOMA retarder-prover, a Sunriser, at his Locks Heath shop in November, confirms: "They know the problem before we do and it is unlikely there are problems anyway."

Sunderland likens Teleguard to feeling under the weather for a few days before a cold hits full force. Before the system is out of action, Teleguard diagnoses the issue and communicates it to KOMA. "It's monitored by a human, not a computer, who looks at the system and alerts the engineer to go with the right parts before the machine breaks down," Sunderland says.

It is this kind of reliability that makes Jenkins a committed KOMA devotee. And to prove his point, he says he has had his original KOMA retarder-prover at his Fareham shop

▼ **Williams Refrigeration is on the third generation of its Dough Master control system**




for the past 20 years and it still works "absolutely beautifully".

Sunderland says KOMA has many machines in bakeries that are decades old. "A customer recently asked if his 30-year warranty had expired yet."

Small changes

Retarder-provers do not tend to change much to the naked eye. They do what they do and, save for computer technology improvements for control panels or work on refrigerant gases, their concept is simple – they hold raw product at a given temperature in stasis until required, after which the proving process is started.

Bakers love them because they save hugely on staff costs. As Norbake's sales and marketing manager David Charlesworth explains: "When you finish your shift and have done all the major work" 



in the craft bakery, it doesn't take long to fill three or four racks of product to go into the retarder-prover, and proving happens while you are still in bed."

However, Benier UK, which represents Swedish manufacturer Sveba-Dahlen, now has available in the UK what it says is a brand new concept for retarder-provers – a "dough-on-demand" system. In standard retarder-provers, the bread is removed from the prover and then baked, but the new machine, the Fermatic Q4, can hold the dough for six to 10 hours after it has been proved before baking.

Steve Lamb, sales manager of Benier UK, says the baker can bake required amounts at different times throughout the day from the same batch of dough. It is designed to enable bakers to offer fresh bread throughout the day, keeping the dough in top condition, and making production more flexible.

"The advantage of this process is that bakers need only make one batch of dough that requires proving just once. They can now access ready-to-bake dough several times during the day and ensure product freshness is guaranteed," says Lamb.

The company claims the taste and the aroma are improved, because the enzymes in the dough have time to develop, delivering a better-quality baked bread. "The Fermatic Q4 gives bakers the freedom and opportunity to influence the

◆ Sveba-Dahlen's Fermatic system is claimed to hold dough for six to 10 hours after it has been proved, before baking

◆ Improvements to equipment are often behind-the-scenes adjustments



Alaska rebuilt

Fifteen years ago Robert Burns, managing director and chairman of Burns the Bread, a Glastonbury business, bought an Alaska retarder-prover, a machine that is no longer manufactured.

Burns, who has six shops, bought the machine at an exhibition at the NEC in Birmingham, straight off a stand, because he got "such a good deal on it". It worked fine, said Burns, until he had to get a new control panel, which he sourced from Foster's. Next, he had a problem with the condensing coil and had to have a new one made because he could not get the spares.

The machine has been completely rebuilt since, he says, and he uses engineers from RexTec to maintain it. "If you have someone who can



maintain it, there's no point in buying a new one and it does a superb job."

The machine has four racks, with 80 trays, and Burns uses it for speciality bread products, Danish pastries, bun goods and soft rolls. "When the bakers arrive, they've got four racks of product nicely proved and ready to bake," says Burns. "It gives us a good start in the morning."

times and settings to completely suit their working day. It is a major step forward in retarder-prover technology," Lamb claims.

Fine-tuning

Williams Refrigeration says ongoing improvements to retarder-provers tend to be about fine-tuning efficiencies and quality – behind-the-scenes adjustments that are not seen visually. Nick Garner, national sales manager, says: "Across the industry, it is about refinements and controllability. We set the scene with our Dough Master control – a touchscreen door-mounted control system – and we are now on our third generation of that control system. It's tweaking the technology."

Garner adds: "Eight years ago, we identified that most control systems on retarder-provers were very complicated. As a user you could walk up to the machine and not be able to fathom how to start using it. We looked at the

technology that everyone was using and tried to make the control system as easy to use as cash machines."

Williams supplies Asda, Sainsbury's and Morrisons with retarder-provers and one of the reasons is because the control systems are so easy to use, says Garner.

European Process Plant (EPP), which sells MIWE equipment, says the main advancements have been on the accurate control of conditions within retarder-provers. Keith Stalker, EPP managing director, says the newest control system is touch control. "It is very easy to use and to get information off the screen."

MIWE offers units from a single rack capacity up to more than 100 racks. Stalker says: "The market is showing definite signs of improving and there's more confidence. The order book is stronger than it has been for some time."

He says MIWE is constantly improving, always looking to improve the efficiency of its equipment. "One of the focuses has always been energy savings – but not just retarder-provers," Stalker says. "The thing about MIWE is it offers a complete programme depending on what the customer wants to do with the process, from deep-frozen products through to proved products."

"We can provide a flexible solution and we cater for artisan bakers through to big industrial bakers that use batch retarder-provers."

Stalker says MIWE's strength is that it makes industrial machines with first-class stainless steel construction with a choice of capacity and door layouts.