

Choosing right, buying smart

By Cindy Dowling

Whether you're starting from scratch or simply upgrading an existing fit-out, quality kitchen equipment is an expensive but very necessary investment. With every manufacturer insisting their particular product is superior, we thought it might be time for some objective equipment advice from fit-out specialists, Sydney Commercial Kitchens.

Combi Ovens:

There are many benefits for the hospitality operator in owning a combi-steam oven. Not only will your food be more flavoursome and have no cross contamination of flavours, but combis offer real savings in terms of both food costs and wages. If you are currently cooking roast beef in a static or convection oven, your shrinkage rate on the meat would be around 30 per cent. Now let's assume you are paying \$10 per kilo for the meat. This means the real cost of the meat is \$15 per kilo after cooking. Combi-steamers reduce shrinkage to as little as 5 to 10 per cent, depending on how you use the oven; meaning substantial cost savings over time. Savings can also be made in staff wages. Combi steamers allow you

to prepare weekend food during the week at less costly wage rates. So, on the weekend you only require someone to use the regeneration facility to reheat the food.

Other benefits of the combi-steam oven are standardised performance and a reduction in occupational health and safety issues, since carrying heavy pots of boiling water is no longer necessary.

There are three types of combi-steam oven to choose from:

1. Boiler based combi ovens

A steam generator injects the steam directly into the oven chamber. They are available in either gas or electric models, although electric is by far the most popular of the two, despite being more expensive.

2. Direct water injection combi steamers

Steam is manufactured by injecting water directly onto the element. The steam is generated in the oven chamber itself.

3. Closed system combi steamers

This model controls the amount of steam generated and will ultimately save the user a lot of money. With conventional technology, steam escaping from the oven chamber needs to be continually replaced to



reach the pre-set amount of moisture. The patented closed system allows the amount of steam used to be tailored to the type of food. Only the amount of moisture absorbed by the food needs to be replaced.

Dishwashers:

Dishwashers fall into two categories – under-counter or pass-through.

When buying an under counter dishwasher there are several factors to consider.

- Water consumption – gone are the days when dishwashers needed to use 7 or more litres of water per wash cycle. A good-quality dishwasher should use no more than 2.5 – 3.5 litres per cycle.
- Power requirements – most under-bench dishwashers require 15 amps, single-phase power supply. If you are replacing an older model you may need to upgrade your power supply as many older models only needed 10 amps.

Planning makes perfect

The aim of planning a kitchen is to achieve a work area with maximum efficiency, and safety and keep wastage of labour, energy and materials to a minimum.

Kitchen design principles remain the same whether you are planning a large or small kitchen, except that space limitations have a bearing on the flow pattern efficiency in smaller kitchens. It is wise to seek the advice of a professional kitchen designer.

Before you can start planning a kitchen you need a good basic understanding of the main types of food services, the structure of menus, flow patterns, what equipment is available, how each item of equipment can be used and its capacity.

Gathering accurate information

on which to base the final plan is extremely important. It ensures the most energy-efficient and productive kitchen is established for your operation.

Planning basics

• The menu

The menu is the essential link in the preparatory stage of planning a kitchen. The menu will determine the type of preparation space, cooking equipment and refrigeration facilities required for the kitchen.

When preparing the menu, thought should be given to the number of staff who will be working in the kitchen and the number of customers to be served during the average shift. Initially it may be wise to have a number of alternative

menus which will allow flexibility in case of space limitations.

Having prepared a menu, each dish should be broken down into its ingredients to assess the storage requirements, preparation techniques and methods of cooking. This analysis will also help with the assessment of space required for storage and preparation areas for equipment in the proposed kitchen.

It is at this stage that the menu may be altered to suit the space available for the kitchen. Allowance should be made for future changes in relation to menus, to dining trends and kitchen staff.

The type of establishment will determine the style of menu

to be prepared, whether it is a restaurant, function centre, cafe or takeaway food business.

Based on the above considerations, a list of food storage needs, both dry and refrigerated and a list of preparation, cooking and serving equipment should be made.

• Flow pattern

To determine the production flow pattern of a kitchen, the total environment needs to be assessed. Consideration needs to be given to:

1. the space available.
2. the entrance for deliveries.
3. the location of the dining rooms.
4. the location of existing services such as gas, power, water and waste.
5. the location of windows.
6. the numbers to be catered for.
7. the number of kitchen staff.

- Dimensions – not all new under-bench dishwashers fit under the standard bench top height of 900mm. This is because there is normally a 50mm profile edge, meaning your dishwasher should have a height of less than 850mm. If in doubt, check the measurement with your stainless steel provider.
- Drainage – careful consideration should be given to the plumbing requirements of your premises. Under-bench dishwashers come in two styles; gravity drain and drain pump. Many premises are unsuitable for gravity drain dishwashers. Check with your plumber before purchasing.

For pass-through washers, consider the following:

Water consumption – look for dishwashers that have lower water consumption. The cost savings will really be significant over time. Less water also means less detergent.

- Wash pump capacity – the greater the wash pump capacity the greater the ability to wash the dishes to a high standard.
- Power requirements – pass-through dishwashers are available in both 15 amp single phases and 3 phase power. The general rule is that the busier your establishment, the more dishes you'll need to wash and therefore the greater the need for a fast

recovery in the water temperature. On the downside, the faster the recovery the greater the power requirements.

- Dimensions – pass-through dishwashers come in three basic sizes – small, medium and large. These days there are also a number of imported European dishwashers on the Australian market and their sizing differs from the normal. If you are establishing new premises this is not a problem, but be careful. If you are replacing your existing dishwasher and the sizing is different then you may be up for the cost of alteration to your stainless steel bench work.

Glass washers:

Key issues to consider before purchasing a glass washer are:

- Does your current electrical supply match the requirement of the new machine?
- Water usage for glass washers commonly varies between 2.5 – 7 litres per cycle. You will need to determine how much hot water you have available and then match that to the needs of our business.
- Rack size – if the rack size is different to what you currently have, you will have to buy more and replace the internal rack storage system. This can be very expensive and is best avoided if possible.
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8. the number of waiting staff.

The flow pattern of a kitchen is comparable to any industrial manufacturing process. Raw materials enter at one end of the production line and exit at the other as a finished product.

The flow needs to reduce working effort, cross traffic and avoid bottlenecks. Clearances between benches, tables and equipment must avoid congestion. If possible the kitchen needs to be divided into clearly defined areas so that the tasks can be carried out in the most efficient and productive manner.

The basic flow pattern stages of a kitchen are:

- storage – dry, refrigeration and frozen foods.
- preparation – wet and dry areas.
- cooking – wet and dry areas.
- serving – hot foods and cold foods.
- dish and pot washing.

- cutlery and crockery.
- removal of waste.

The major flow pattern involves the food's progress from raw products through to cooked and plated food leaving the kitchen. There are however, some minor flow patterns to consider when designing the kitchen.

• cooking utensils -> from clean storage -> to preparation area -> to the cooking area -> to pot sink -> to clean storage .

• crockery/cutlery -> from clean storage -> to the servery -> to the dining room -> to the dishwashing area -> to the clean storage area.

• garbage is generated in the storage, preparation and cooking areas, at the servery and in the dishwasher area. OH

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