

Space age

With today's chefs coming under increasing pressure to maximise covers, design has never been more important in helping to maximise space

WITH THE COST OF RENTING AND buying commercial property continuing to rise, the importance of design has never been greater. Operators are looking at the layout of their businesses, both front and back of house, to see where they can make changes to their space in order to maximise profitability.

For restaurants this means increasing the front of house area as much as possible, but as a result this will, of course, reduce the back of house space. This has resulted in designers and operators searching for alternative ways to fit everything they need into a smaller footprint without sacrificing functionality or workflow. "Manufacturers of traditional equipment, such as ovens, ranges and dishwashers, recognise this and equipment is getting smaller," says Sam Starling, group marketing co-ordinator for Parry, "but this can only go so far and that is where bespoke fabrication comes into its own."

Although it's not yet possible for operators

to have appliances specifically manufactured to size it is feasible to have certain equipment, like trolleys and prep units, manufactured to individual specifications.

Planning

Organising a redesign takes careful consideration and operators need to think about two key things: the budget and the needs of the business. The cost of smaller things such as electrical and plumbing equipment can be significant, so operators should get accurate costs before making a commitment. "Look out for innovations that are making major differences in equipment performance, such as integral reverse osmosis and heat recovery systems on dishwashers," advises Bill Downie, managing director of Meiko UK. "These innovations have a cost, of course, but over the working life of the machine the initial investment will be repaid many times over."

As well as being realistic about what

can be achieved within the given budget, buyers also need to consider how many people will be using the facilities and how often. "Operators need to ask themselves what is the aim of the facility and will it be free of charge or subsidised. Is it about staff retention, speed of service, as a benefit to staff or to keep staff on site to generate

income?" says Hannah Somers, design consultant for Catering Design Group (CDG). "Will it be used as a multi-

functional space – perhaps soft seating and a meeting area in one section and dining in the other? This is a request we're experiencing more and more as customers look for more flexibility to maximise the use of a space."

Customers are, of course, the most important consideration and their needs are paramount. Operators need to ensure that the redesign will still allow staff to fulfil their customers'



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capable of producing the volume and quality of food required,” says Simon Frost, chair of the Catering Equipment Suppliers Association

(CESA). “Many manufacturers now offer slimline versions of their standard designs, to help maintain capacity in a smaller kitchen.”

Trends

The casual dining sector has really take off recently and contract caterers can learn a lot from the growing popularity of a more casual approach to eating that today’s consumers seem to favour.

According to recent statistics from the NDP Group, casual dining restaurants have attracted an extra 47m visits each year, compared with five years ago, making it the fastest growing sector in the eating out market. “Why? Because it’s informal, offers good quality food, good value and high levels of service,” says Somers. “Casual dining operators design their spaces to shout ‘this is our offering’, ‘this is our personality’ and ‘these are our values’. The look is super-raw, edgy and industrial, with a hint of ‘seedy’! It’s big, bold and in your face – there really are no boundaries.”

It’s easy for contract caterers to replicate such a look with a slightly warmer feel by creating focal points and eye-catching statement pieces, such as light fittings and pieces of art in earthy shades. “The worldwide colour specialist Pantone has announced its colour for 2015 as Marsala – a naturally robust and earthy wine red which enriches our minds, bodies and souls,” says Somers. “Contract caterers can take advantage of the trend by utilising its warmth and richness to create feature blocks of vibrant colour across the catering space.”

Open kitchens remain popular, with consumers enjoying the theatre of watching chefs hard at work in the kitchen, as are chef cooking stations, which also add a touch of theatre to proceedings. “The vintage look popular in previous years has become increasingly paired back with interiors sporting more industrial touches: distressed stamp-effect lettering and prints; metal lighting and furniture; exposed brickwork; and traditional work surfaces – such as butcher’s blocks – reconditioned into





furniture," says Kerry Mundy-Allen, head of design for Glo Creative, the in-house design agency at Planglow.

Display counters have increased in popularity of late with more and more contract caterers asking for units with straight glass, creating a look that's a real blast from the past. "As far as I can tell there are two reasons for this," says Kurran Gadhvi, marketing manager for Valera. "Firstly, it is part of a general return to the retro fashion of the 70s and 80s when virtually everybody had straight glass. Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, straight glass is a lot cheaper than curved glass and so this appeals to anyone on a tight budget, as most of them are in the current economic climate."

With clever design even the smallest of spaces can be reworked to a business' advantage, so operators need to talk to the experts to maximise their space and bottom lines.

CDG

www.cateringdesign.co.uk

CESA

www.cesa.org.uk

Meiko

www.meiko-uk.co.uk

Parry

www.parry.co.uk

Planglow

www.planglow.com/glo

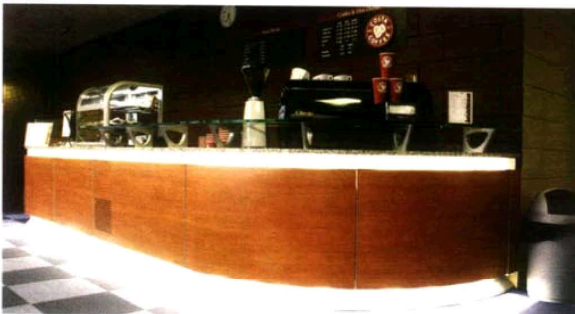
Valera

www.valera.co.uk

1 Table-top cooking

FRIMA's VarioCooking Center 112T is the first table-top model of its type, bringing multifunction technology to smaller kitchens. Chefs can boil, grill, fry, low temperature cook and deep fry in one unit. It's up to four times as fast, and saves up to 40% in energy, compared to conventional appliances.

www.frima-uk.co.uk



2 Eco wash

The DC PD/PG50 glass or dishwasher boasts an unusually economical wash tank at just 12L, as compared with a traditional model that has a 30L tank. Based on a two-service day this will save up to 13,000L of water a year and the subsequent energy required to heat it.

www.dcpproducts.co.uk

3 Multi-purpose BBQ

Monolith Grill UK's new Kamado barbeque combines German design with traditionally manufactured, superior ceramics from China at the market's most competitive prices. It's ideal for direct grilling, indirect grilling, baking, drying and smoking. There are three sizes, including Le Chef – the big Monolith, and a range of accessories to tailor the unit to the chef's preferences.

www.monolith-kamado-grill.co.uk

4 Light fantastic

Meiko's 'Green Eye' for M-i-Q flight dishwashing system consists of a lighting system on the front fascia of the machine, which indicates to the operator where to load the dirty plates and bowls to improve capacity utilisation and minimise resources. The Eye is also able to detect gaps on the conveyor belt between dishware, so that it only activates the rinse function for specific sections of the belt.

www.meiko-uk.co.uk

5 Curve appeal

The Amphora serve-over counter is available in five sizes ranging from 85cm to 250cm, with optional support cases and bar counters, both high and low. Choose from an extensive range of coloured lacquered finishes for the cabinets, finished with contrasting stainless steel front and side skirting. The Amphora collection includes chilled, dry heated and ambient options.

www.valera.co.uk



