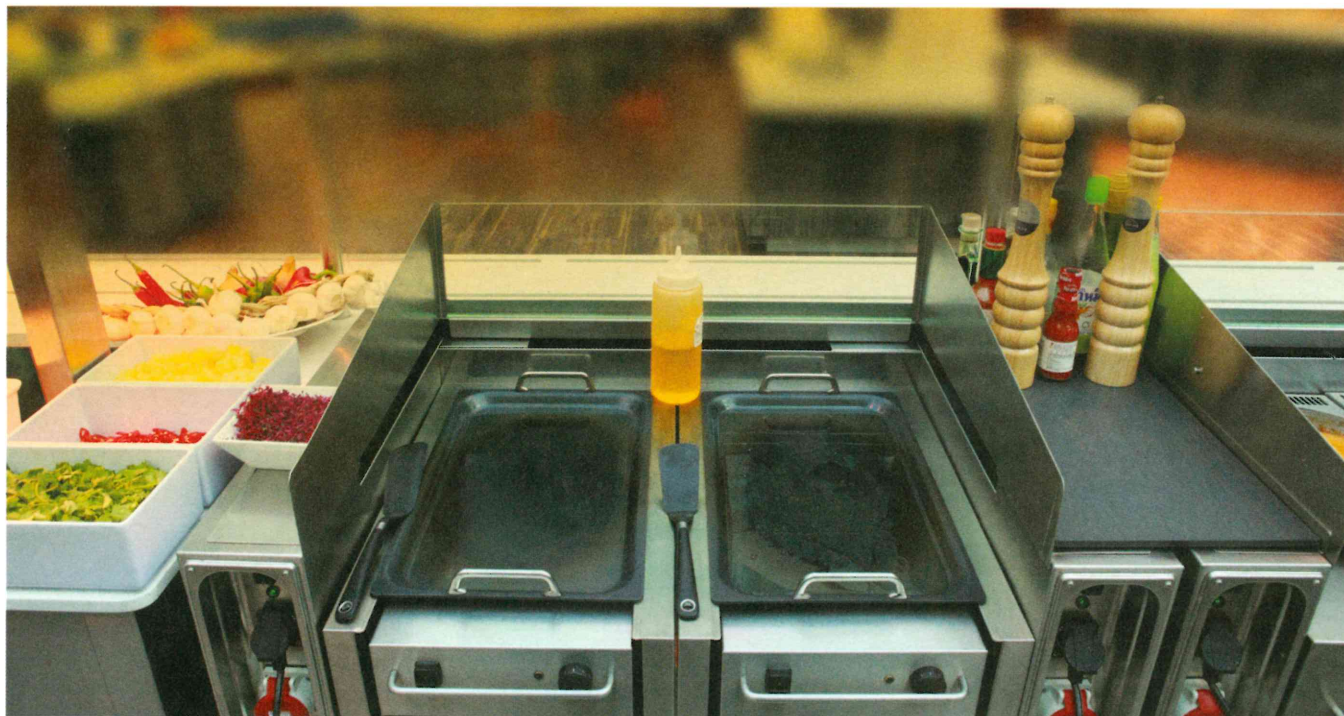


FRESH START



Updating kitchens and dining areas will not only improve efficiency, but enhance students' dining experiences too

The design of both front and back of house is vitally important for any catering establishment as it can make or break a business. Behind the scenes it's essential that the kitchen flows effortlessly to ensure efficient service and front of house needs to appeal on an aesthetic level while remaining functional. By speaking to the experts and meticulous planning university catering outlets can have it all.

As the people who are going to be working in the space the majority of the time it's only fair that chefs have input into the design. However, the experts have gone through the process dozens of times so it's vital that university caterers take full advantage of their knowledge.

"Caterers and operators should be at the heart of the design," says

Matt Connell, creative designer at HK Projects. "The project and spatial arrangement should work from the plate backwards considering the most efficient route through preparation, production and service."

Of course, some catering teams are happy to leave everything up to the experts as they are unsure of what it is they really

want or need. This is where design teams can step in and guide caterers towards an initial design.

"They might have quite a lot of design flair, but want guidance on flow and fashions," explains Louise Arber, education specialist for The Alan Nuttall Partnership. "Ultimately, our job is to take an idea and make the design the best it can be, practically, technically and aesthetically. It's always helpful if a client can show us examples of what they like, perhaps drawing inspiration from outlets on the high street. We can then start formulating a design using their own identity."

WHAT TO CONSIDER

When designing a new catering area there are many things that university caterers need to take into consideration. However,



making the most of space available and the subsequent improvements to health and safety issues are a good place to start.

"Purchasing new equipment offers the opportunity to source modern, flexible equipment to improve efficiency and create a kitchen that works for your operation," says Graham Kille, managing director of Frima UK.

Ensuring that anything that goes into a kitchen or dining area is flexible is essential as it's important to think of the current needs of the business as well as future needs. Therefore it's wise to opt for multifunctional equipment and flexible dining furniture that can be moved or rearranged as needed.

"A good designer will ensure the client's business objectives are a priority and then

"A good designer will ensure the client's business objectives are a priority"

put themselves in the shoes of both the client and its customers," explains Claire Smith, business development director at Catering Design Group. "We start by looking at the practicality of the space, its flexibility, and whether the initial brief requires it to be multifunctional. Consideration will be given to the number of covers, speed of service and indeed table turns."

It's not just the design of furnishings

that university caterers need to consider but the whole effect it has on the space. Ambience is a key component of creating the ideal dining experience for students so it's vital that the design creates just that.

"It is important to ensure this is right from the outset," warns Smith. "It can prove to be an extremely costly exercise to re-visit a design once it has been installed."

Changing the design of a kitchen provides university caterers with the ideal opportunity to make serious long-term financial savings when it comes to investing in new equipment that offers savings in energy.

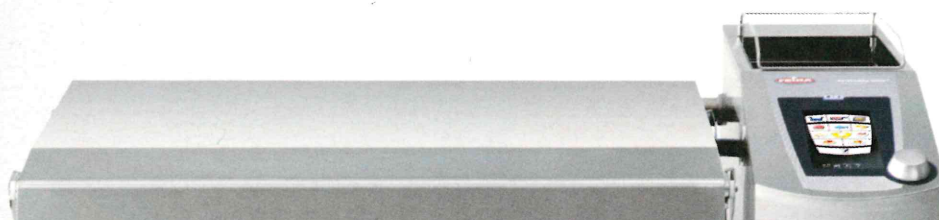
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around 33% should be expected in terms of less energy, chemicals and water usage – but these savings also bring the benefit of potential space savings,” points out Bill Downie, managing director of Meiko.

From heat recovery to integral softeners and reverse osmosis there are several technological innovations that operators should look out for. Waste is also a big issue for commercial kitchens, so this is something that needs to be worked into the design. Vacuum waste outlets, for example, can ease the design process because they remove the need for bins in the kitchen – saving space.

“Vacuum waste systems can be retrofitted into existing kitchens and they can be shared by food courts and they easily slot into a dishwasher system or

kitchen tabling,” explains Downie. “They also eliminate the problems associated with transporting leaky bags of food waste through a building and down the lift to the waste storage area.”

*“Our job is to take
an idea and make
the design the best
it can be”*

KITCHEN ESSENTIALS

Every item of kitchen equipment is essential to the smooth running of service, but there are certain key pieces that can make a dramatic difference not only to

efficiency, but food quality too.

“One essential piece of equipment is the combi steamer,” says Anja Halbauer, marketing and PR manager at MKN. “Due to its multifunctionality it can be used for different purposes, from steaming and combi steaming to baking and sous vide cooking – all is possible with a combi steamer.”

Operators should consider anything which makes life easier for them. There are now warewashers on the market with colour coded components, such as wash arms, which show staff members exactly what needs to be removed for cleaning. Not only does this make the process far quicker, but it also makes it easier for staff members whose first language isn't English.

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Warewashers are vital for any foodservice business and they range from modest under counter glass washers right up to large rack and flight systems. Regardless of the size of the space available and the capacity of an operation, it's essential that they are reliable and robust enough to cope with busy periods.

"Many catering equipment manufacturers have applied technological innovation and design to help operators maximise profitability, reduce costs, increase efficiencies and have a smaller carbon footprint," explains Bob Wood, director of DC Warewashing and Ice-making Systems. "A redesign offers the opportunity to incorporate new equipment and benefit from these advances."

Being one of the biggest consumers of energy and water in a commercial kitchen, warewashers also offer the greatest potential for savings in these areas thanks to innovations in technology.

"Operators should take into consideration not only the features, results and the initial cost of any warewashing equipment, but also the long-term running costs, life of the equipment and ongoing spares and maintenance costs," adds Wood.

Refrigeration is essential, but can take up considerable space in kitchens, so operators need to investigate all the options to find a solution that best meets their needs. From upright refrigerators and freezers to walk in cold rooms and refrigerated drawers – there's something for every eventuality.

"Consideration should also be given to blast chillers, particularly in those operations where cooked food is being cooled down to serve refrigerated or to be later regenerated and served hot," says Tim Whitfield, director of GastroNorth.



"A redesign offers the opportunity to incorporate new equipment and benefit from these advances"

"Around 80-90% of new kitchens will have a blast chiller in order to meet HACCP legislation regarding the safe cooling and storage of cooked foods."

FRONT OF HOUSE

When looking at equipment for front of house use it has to be both attractive – and therefore sit well in its surroundings – as well as fit for purpose. It's all about catching consumers' eyes and displaying food and drink in the most appealing way possible while retaining quality at all times.

Front of house displays are vital as they are the windows to the food and drink offering and have serious pulling power. Therefore it's important to consider how the food and drink is going to be displayed at its best.

"Operators want to ensure that stock is not only displayed in the best possible way, but also maintained at the required temperature to preserve quality and freshness," says Jon Usher, head of UK sales and marketing at Glen Dimplex Professional Appliances (GDPA). "Whether looking for a hot or cold display, thought should be given to efficiency and reliability at all times."

Consumers love theatre when it comes to eating out so it's not surprising that front of house cooking has increased

TOP DESIGN TIPS

- **Check claims** "Caterers should request independent data to verify manufacturers' claims regarding the energy credentials of their products," says Kille. "This ensures that those buying or specifying modern kitchen technology have access to comparative energy usage figures that are based on set guidelines, which can help them make informed buying choices."
- **Seek inspiration** "Look at what's popular on the high street and make time to talk with other universities to find out what worked well for them and perhaps not so well," suggests Smith. "More importantly, speak to your customers, ask them what they want from their dining space and indeed what would inspire and encourage them to continue to return."
- **Talk to the experts** "An experienced catering equipment distributor will know what the most popular machines are on the market today, the ongoing trends and new features," says Wood. "They will also be in a position to be able to advise you on what catering equipment would best suit the needs of your catering operation."
- **Ensure accurate monitoring** "Temperature monitoring is controlled by extensive regulations and legislation, therefore ensuring a kitchen is equipped with the latest technology is a sure-fire way to increase overall efficiency and manage ongoing costs," explains Rag Hulait, senior sales consultant at Monika. "Wireless, digital monitoring not only provides 24hr temperature readings, but is also fully traceable and accountable at all stages."
- **Opt for flexibility and versatility** "Design a space that will support change," advises Whitfield. "Instead of selecting menu-specific appliances, select versatile multifunctional equipment that can adapt to ever changing food trends."
- **Try before you buy** "As well as the chefs, designers need to speak to the manufacturers and get a good understanding of their equipment and how it works because if a piece of equipment that is currently being suggested is not quite what is required then the manufacturer may be in a position to offer a better alternative, if consulted," says Dan Loria, business development manager at Grande Cuisine.