

Cooking Equipment Buying Tips

What to consider when buying catering equipment will, of course, depend on the type of equipment you're looking for. Investing in a combi steamer will require an entirely different decision making process to buying a small, table top fryer. However we hope that these notes offer good general advice, which is applicable to most categories of catering equipment.

1. **Buy from a reputable manufacturer** to be sure of compliance with all relevant regulations, as well as ongoing service and spare parts availability.
2. Make sure you buy the **correct level of duty**. Don't expect a light duty countertop item to withstand heavy use. Equally, don't pay thousands of pounds for heavy duty kit if it is for light commercial use.
3. Ensure that your chosen model will **provide the output you're looking for**. Good manufacturers should be able to provide reliable output figures for their equipment. But do check that the capacities and output quoted are like for like. With items like griddles, for example, is the output of burgers per hour for frozen or fresh product? If output is quoted for steaks, what size and degree of cooking? And for fryers, check whether the capacities and output quoted are for fresh frozen, or chilled product?
4. Consider your present and future requirements and always buy the size to suit this need, allowing **for future expansion**.
5. Choose a product with **power to spare**, rather than running the unit flat out to achieve the heat and output you need.



6. Would **gas or electric** powered equipment be the best option? Often, this will be dictated by circumstances but, given an equal choice, you need to weigh the installation and operating costs against the initial purchase price. Electric products are generally cheaper to buy but energy costs are often lower with gas. However, gas products now require interlocked extraction systems which can make the electric option more attractive. We have certainly seen this with the success of our all-electric six burner ranges in both our Silverlink 600 and Opus 700 ranges.
7. **Always talk to an independent dealer** about your requirements; they will be able to offer impartial advice on the best product for your particular needs.
8. Go to a **dealer showroom** so that you can assess for yourself the design and build quality of different brands.
9. Is the equipment **easy to clean**? Look for dirt traps – there shouldn't be any on the best designed equipment!
10. Other things to look out for include **ease of use and safety of operation**. Well-designed equipment from a reputable manufacturer will meet stringent European safety regulations which, for example, limit the temperatures that surfaces and control knobs can reach. Check that controls are well placed and that doors and runners operate smoothly and positively.
11. Think carefully before opting for the cheapest piece of equipment you can find. A cheap product, with an unfamiliar brand name, is likely to have been imported. The low price tag may not really be the bargain it seems. You need to **consider whole life cost** which means taking purchase price, operational cost, maintenance cost, life expectancy and setting that against performance and profit potential. The apparent savings made by buying a cheap item of kitchen equipment can rapidly disappear, not the least in servicing or after a breakdown. Spares can be costly – and take weeks to obtain – if they have to come from halfway around the world. If you had bought a recognised brand



through normal distribution lines it is likely the part would arrive within 24 hours. And don't forget the loss of earning you'll incur whilst your product is out of action.

12. It's also important to think ahead when investing in new equipment. Again, don't just look at the price tag in front of you. Think instead of the new and improved services you could provide with the right equipment. With an **Opus SelfCooking Center whiteefficiency**, for example, you can easily expand your catering offering. Yet it can **pay for itself within twelve months**, due to the significant savings which can be made in raw materials, energy and labour costs.



13. Check whether the quoted price includes all your **essential accessories and options**. For example, some manufacturers charge extra to supply products on castors.
14. Consider buying **two smaller instead of one large unit** as this will provide greater flexibility and reduces the impact of any breakdowns. This is particularly sound advice when buying combi steamers where two stacked six or ten grid ovens provide more versatility than a single ten grid model. And even in the busiest of kitchens, consider adding a small, light duty fryer which you can reserve for specialist use (e.g., highly flavoured or vegetarian products). This will extend the period of time between oil changes for your heavy duty fryer
15. You should also be looking at the **back up service available**, such as the manufacturer's field service network and provision of on-site training.
16. Check **warranty details**, does the guarantee include parts and labour?