# **Counter Top Cooking**

Cooking with counter top equipment can be a valuable space and resource saver for your commercial kitchen operation. Counter top equipment is smaller, more economical, and more efficient than its floor model equivalent. This comes at the trade-off, however, of having less power to cook the food itself. If you're looking to change your menu around, or supplement an existing item, counter top equipment can be an affordable permanent or temporary solution. *Note:* *Keep in mind that counter top equipment often cannot stand up to the same rigors of heavy duty usage that a floor model is designed for.*

## Char broilers

Char broilers are designed to bring the outdoor grilling experience into the food service kitchen.  Using either directed radiant heat or lava rocks, char broilers can effectively grill any food product, leaving distinctive grill marks and unbeatable flavor.

**Pro's:                                                                          Con's:**

*-Brings the flavor of an outdoor grill*               *-Unit stays lit throughout the day,*

-Utilizes smoke and intense heat to sear             *resulting in high energy usage*

and brown meat effectively                                -Not efficient due to distance

***-****Grill marks help market food product*                     between burners and grills

**-**Maintains constant temperature and                  *-Has to be pre-heated*

reduces cooking times                                       -Smoke requires ventilation

**Advantages to using a Counter Top Char Broiler instead of a Floor Model:**

* Creates less smoke
* Takes up less space
* Uses less energy
* Can be used to supplement a larger operation without the full expense of a floor model

**Radiant Heat vs. Lava Rocks**

Radiant Heat utilizes open gas burners at the bottom of the unit with metal vents directing the heat. This creates well defined and specific hot spots on the char broiler, which facilitates cooking. These models add the least amount of flavor, but are the least expensive in the long run. The slanted sheaths are also easier to clean.

\*Link\*

Lava Rocks are heated via the same type of open gas burners as in a radiant heat model, but the lava rocks simulate the flavor of cooking with a charcoal grill. Additionally, bits of fat that drip onto the rocks create flavorful smoke that can further enhance your food product. The trade off is that the lava rocks must be replaced biannually, and during the life of the machine, the charcoal grates may have to be replaced as well. This causes these machines to cost more in the long run. They are also more of a fire hazard, due to the increased flare-ups from the grease build up on the briquettes.

\*Link\*

## Griddles

Griddles are a flat metal plate made of steel, cast iron, or aluminum. The surface is heated throughout, allowing a large number of items to cook simultaneously and separately, speeding up service without contaminating flavor. Properly seasoned or non-stick griddles prohibit food from sticking to the surface. They are also easily cleaned. Griddles are versatile pieces of equipment that can supplement the need of almost any kitchen.

\*Link\*

## Cheese Melters

Cheese melters are similar to salamanders in that they use over fire burners to put a finishing touch onto product before it's served. Cheese melters differ from salamanders in that they do not produce the same amount of heat, nor are they designed to stand up to the intense rigors of heavy duty use. They are, however, perfect for smaller applications in an economical, energy efficient, package.

\*Link\*

## Hot Plates

If your kitchen needs a few extra burners, but a range would be too costly or too large to fit into your kitchen, a hot plate can be the perfect solution. The BTU rating of hot plates can approach that of a full range, so high heat cooking is a possibility. Hot Plates can supplement a busy kitchen in countless ways, all without having to buy a full range.

\*Link\*

## Panini Grills

These small, efficient grills can be used to dramatically increase the profits of your business. Traditionally, panini grills are similar to waffle makers, in that they have two hot grill surfaces connected via a pivoting joint. Closing them together allows you to grill both sides of a sandwich, creating a toasted sandwich with appealing grill marks. Panini grills can also be used to cook vegetables and other various food products. The biggest advantage of a panini grill is that it does not have to be under commercial ventilation.

\*Link\*

## Toaster Ovens

Toaster ovens come in two varieties; pop up and conveyor. Pop up toasters are similar to residential toasters, and are ideal for small restaurants looking for an affordable option to make toasted bread or bread products. Buying a commercial pop up toaster, however, means that they will stand up to heavy usage much better than a residential model. Conveyor toasters are more suited to applications looking for large amounts of toasted bread to be produced. They are consequently more expensive.

\*Link\*

## Conveyor or Impinger Ovens

Looking to make pizza, toasted sandwiches, and be able to re-heat product all in the same unit? Impinger ovens can be a definite, profitable solution.

\*Link\*

## Counter Top Pizza Ovens

A counter top pizza oven can be a viable alternative to buying a full single deck floor model pizza oven. It cooks in the same manner as the larger pizza ovens, but the space is significantly smaller (most accommodate 14" or 12" pizza's). Fortunately, they come with significant energy, cost, and size savings to make up for their size. They provide an easy alternative to the floor models, allowing you to add pizza to your menu.

\*Link\*

All Information is the written property of Harris Restaurant Supply, Inc. and may not be used without the expressed, written consent of Harris Restaurant Supply, Inc.