

Equipment—The Backbone Of The Kitchen



September 1, 2012 — When I cover trade shows, and you know I do a lot of them, I sometimes hear people complain that there are too many equipment companies there. That puzzles me because, let's face it, without the ovens, utensils, mixing machines, ice makers, cleaning equipment, bar and serving equipment, refrigeration system, chef uniforms, software systems and much more, these establishments wouldn't run.

Just because you cannot sample their foods at the booths doesn't mean they're not necessary. Food samples are great, but even those made from raw fruits and vegetables required some sort of equipment, if only a knife, to get that food ready for you!

I found some interesting information about kitchen equipment in The Dream Kitchen Survey® that came across my desk in July from Y-Pulse LLC, a research and consulting firm for the food business.

The responses came from education foodservice professionals gathered at the NACUFS and SNA national conferences (National Association of College and University Food Services and School Nutrition Association, respectively).

"Flexibility is a key characteristic that foodservice directors look for in foodservice equipment," according to The Dream Kitchen report. "Mobility to accommodate changing needs and HAACCP compliance are crucial. Many foodservice equipment manufacturers have not changed their equipment specifications in decades and they don't work for the kitchen staff of today. Height requirements are a good example—today's foodservice worker is likely a much shorter female employee than the tall male employee that was more common in kitchens decades ago. Foodservice directors also want equipment that is as physically undemanding as possible as it is far more practical for today's workforce that is not as skilled as in years past."

Here is a sampling of what foodservice directors would love in their Dream Kitchen:

- Walk-in refrigeration with a glass door to view stock without opening the door
- Practical items that are right-sized for today's workforce in terms of height, weight and complexity
- Internal doors that disappear when open rather than blocking aisles
- Efficient equipment, both in functionality and energy use
- Easy-to-clean or self-cleaning items
- Mobile equipment that lasts, not value-engineered equipment that meets a price point and becomes almost disposable after a year
- Contemporary décor, lighting and signage that is on-trend

Lots to chew on for equipment manufacturers...

The NAFEM Show, held every other year, is the place where equipment is the focus, and it's coming up next year, Feb. 7-9, 2013, in Orlando. And this month we feature Equipment, Services & Technology in our magazine. Please take the time to read about all the latest tools available to the foodservice industry on the following pages.