

Thinking of introducing all-day dining? Here are some practical tips

In the current economic climate, more and more pubs are thinking about introducing all-day dining in a bid to maximise profits. But first-time ventures into the world of catering can prove daunting.

Pubs need to select the best cooking equipment to cope with numbers they plan to serve, the choice of food on their menu as well as more practical considerations of kitchen space and cost. Getting the right advice on the right products from the start will prevent costly mistakes and profit-swallowing refits.

Understanding terms used to describe equipment is the first step on the road to serving food. In the catering industry, equipment is graded as light, medium or heavy duty. "Light duty" describes counter-top equipment measuring up to 400mm, front to back, and catering for small numbers. At the other end of the scale, heavy duty equipment, measuring 700mm or over, caters for large numbers in bigger pubs or hotels.

The good news is despite the current challenging economic conditions, powerful serviceable equipment can still be obtained at an affordable price. Take for example our **Silverlink 600** range of modular catering equipment. **Well built and flexible**, it combines high level of performance with **style and value for money**.



Not only does Silverlink 600 deliver quality and capacity, all equipment in the range is designed and built for **easy cleaning and safety of operation**. With a comprehensive one year **parts and labour warranty**, it represents a far better option than buying a second hand, unsupported 'bargain'.

One of my key tips, especially for first time investors, would be to make sure you buy the **correct level of duty**. Don't expect a light duty countertop item to withstand heavy use. Equally, don't think that you need to pay thousands of pounds for heavy duty kit if it is for light to medium commercial use. **Modular equipment which can easily be changed** or added to at a later date, is particularly useful for first timers, when the learning curve is steep and it can be difficult to predict what will actually work in practice.



Most of all it's important to buy from a reputable manufacturer which is capable of producing equipment that complies with relevant regulations, as well as providing back-up service and a supply of spare parts. Warranty details should be checked before purchase.

Although operators may know what they are looking for, it's a good idea to keep an eye on the future by selecting a product which allows further expansion in food service. Choosing a product with **power to spare**, rather than running the unit flat out makes good sense. So too does choosing two smaller products rather than one large unit. This will enable you to save energy by switching one off during quieter periods, or the flexibility to cook different products simultaneously.

Some bars and pubs have discovered the cheapest products are not always the best option. A cheap or second hand product with an unfamiliar brand name is likely to have been imported. The low price tag may not seem such a good deal when spares take weeks to arrive or are unavailable and food is off the menu, resulting in loss of earnings.

Good hygiene is of paramount importance in catering and the best equipment should be easy to clean, safe to operate and be free of dirt traps. Some combi steamers (our own SelfCooking Centers included), even have their own self-cleaning system.

Purchase costs should be weighed up against **installation and energy costs** of gas or electric equipment. Although electrical products are generally cheaper, energy costs are often lower with gas. With gas products now requiring interlocked extraction systems, electrical options can seem more attractive.

There's a myriad of options to choose from but independent dealers can offer impartial advice, not only on cooking equipment but also on the other kit you're likely to need for food preparation, refrigeration and ware washing. So aspiring caterers should head to a dealer showroom to assess the design and quality of different brands for themselves.

That's it for now, but if we can provide any other pointers or advice, please get in touch.
Good luck

