

EQUIPMENT SOLUTIONS

Covering equipment
and trends for
successful foodservice
operations

What's on your menu? With the right selection of models and peripherals, ranges can cook almost anything.

NOW You're Cooking!

By James J. Hodl

A fixture in restaurants since before the Civil War, ranges remain the most basic and useful piece of cooking equipment for foodservice businesses. And in the 21st century, ranges also come in a broad selection of variations.

"There are currently ranges that meet the requirements of any menu, available kitchen space and budget," says Susan Sullivan, business-development manager at The Montague Co., Hayward, Calif. "Depending on the features of the range, a restaurant can secure maximum cooking ability in the smallest possible footprint."

The range of ranges is larger than in any restaurant-equipment category. There are standalone all-inclusive ranges that meet the fundamental needs of medium-size restaurants. But for larger restaurants and banquet caterers there are modular ranges that executive chefs can assemble into the expansive cooking station of their dreams. There also are specialty ranges that accommodate stock pots and woks. And for light-duty eateries there are countertop ranges featuring hot plates and griddles.

The latest option in restaurant ranges is the induction range, on which an electromechanical field is rapidly switched in polarity to agitate the atoms in ferrous-metal cooking vessels to create cooking heat inside the pot, but keep the cooking surface cool to the touch.

Adding to the variety are the numerous sizes in which restaurant ranges are offered. While the 36-inch-wide, six-burner model is most popular, ranges are offered in widths from 18 to 60 inches.

On the top surface, there is a choice of open burners with heavy cast-iron or stainless-steel grates, solid plate hot tops, graduated concentric ring cooking plates and griddles. On electric ranges, the choice includes coil elements of various radiuses or solid disks that are slightly raised over the range top to facilitate easy cleaning.

Below the cooking surface, the choice includes conventional or convection ovens, the latter providing not only faster roasting, but also superior baking for rolls, pastries and the occasional pizza. Other models offer closed or open cabinets below. And a few manufacturers offer refrigerated bases for keeping foods at a safe temperature until the moment of cooking.

To round out a range installation, ranges are offered with rear back splashes. Over the range surface, one can add shelving, a salamander (for broiling or grilling meats) or a cheese-melter (for melting cheese on the top of soup crocks, or as a plate warmer or to reheat plated food).

Among current trends in restaurant ranges is to bring features of the larger heavy-duty ranges to the medium-duty models.

TechnoStar ranges from Montague incorporate many of the features of its heavier-duty Legend Series, including iron-angle welded frames for greater durability and no-spring oven doors for easier loading and unloading. Lighter-weight grates on the cooking surfaces are removable and can be cleaned in a dishwasher. An electronic ignition system also automatically shuts down the flow of natural gas when it detects the

cooking flame has gone out. All controls are located in the ranges' cool area.

Available in 24- and 36-inch widths, TechnoStar ranges come with a choice of all 30,000 btu/hr top burners, or a mixture of burners and frytops (griddles).

Phoenix Series heavy-duty sectional ranges from Burlington, Vt.-based Blodgett offer a broad selection of configurations to meet the needs of almost any restaurant. In addition to the usual six-grated gas-burner cooktops, these 36-inch-wide ranges also are available with open-top step-up burners (the back three burners are higher than the front three), hot tops, French tops, a thermostatically controlled griddle and a charbroiler. There also is a choice of standard or convection oven. And in addition to a refrigerated base, the ranges also can be obtained with a freezer in the base.

Other Phoenix features include hand-crafted solid-welded frame and legs and stainless-steel exterior and oven interior. There are both front and rear gas connectors.

Heavy Pot Ranges designed to accommodate stock pots and kettles that can be used for everything from making the soup of the day to mass-producing stew to preparing pasta are marketed by Comstock-Castle Stove Co., Quincy, Ill.

Depending on the model, these ranges come with two, four or eight 25,000-btu "star"-pattern top burners ideal for holding and transferring heat to small to large pots. Optional



Montague Technostar
Model VT26-6

40,000-btu burners also are available. Full-width crumb trays catch all spillage. Four cast-iron top grates measuring approximately 18 x 14 inches are designed to accommodate and provide easier movement of large-diameter pots across the cooktop. Optional additions to the rangetop are griddle plates, hot tops and radiant broilers.

Features include a 500°F maximum thermostat, a safety shut-off device and brass top burner valves. Pressure regulators are factory set for the gas specified. The burners can be easily recalibrated when necessary.

Flexibility in installation and use is promised by the new line of V Series of heavy-duty ranges introduced by Vulcan Food Equipment Group, Louisville, Ky.

"With the V Series, restaurant operators can maximize their kitchen's performance to full potential and take advantage of the latest food trends without having to purchase all new equipment," says Tim Murray, vice president/general manager at Vulcan.

"The technology used has redefined heavy-duty equipment and set a new standard for modularity, versatility and performance," he adds. "We created the V Series with three key goals in mind: to enhance the visual aesthetic

NOW You're Cooking!

for exhibition cooking, which is a key trend in the marketplace today; to increase the versatility to accommodate operators' changes in menu or kitchen requirements; and to deliver superior performance time after time to exceed customer expectations."

V Series features include stainless-steel construction and the ranges' ability to be easily integrated with planchas, fryers, upright broilers, griddles and refrigerated bases. Refrigeration, heated plate cabinets, bain-maries, prep sinks/hand sinks, faucets and pot racks also can be integrated as part of a cooking suite.

An equally broad line of ranges is offered in the Titan Series from Jade Range, Brea, Calif. These include rangetops with two to eight open burners and a choice of standard or convection ovens or cabinets below. Options include not only the usual griddles, hot tops and broilers, but also a sauté station. Jade further offers one- to eight-hole wok ranges.

Montague offers the Excalibur line of customizable cooking suites that incorporate the company's line of Legend heavy-duty cooking equipment. Adaptable for use in both enclosed kitchens and in front open cooking areas, Excalibur is assembled in two straight lines in the center of the food preparation area. Features of these chef islands include unitized construction with seamless surfaces, and a concealed flue system that is integrated into the suite so there is no visible chimney to detract from the suite's appearance. Low-profile refrigerated bases are available to support the heavy-duty cooking modules. Hot wells for soups and sauces and cold decks for preserving salads, are available.

Viking Commercial Products, Fullerton, Calif., last year introduced a line of equipment that can become suite modules. The line includes commercial ranges with sealed 30,000-btu top burners with sealed burner bowls to ease cleaning. Optional removable drip pans can be cleaned in a dishwasher.

Range ovens have cast-iron floors

for maximum heat retention and minimal recovery time and a removable spillage containment pan. Charbroilers feature a patent-pending cantilevered adjustable cooking grate with three-position vertical adjustment every 12 inches. Other suite components can include an indirect-fired convection oven, planchas with two to four heat zones to maximize cooking flexibility, and refrigerated bases with full-extension sliding drawers that can accommodate 12-x-20-x-6-inch pans.

Offered in nearly two dozen colors, these suite modules can add to a fine-dining establishment's décor, especially when installed as an island suite in a display cooking situation.

Also adding to a restaurant's décor are the ranges offered as part of the French-made Molteni line of modular chef suites imported by Electrolux Professional, Charlotte, N.C. Primarily targeted at the display cooking market, Molteni's Podium series, depending on which of three models ordered, can include in its futuristic elliptical design of up to four induction cooking surfaces, an induction wok, open gas burners, a griddle surface, fryers and a bain-marie. Built into the base are electric ovens, two warming drawers, two refrigerated drawers and shelving. Custom enamel finishes in blue, red, black, green, white and ivory can be ordered to match a restaurant's décor.

More customizable are the Molteni Professional 120 suite, in which the ranges sport an old-fashioned design in a choice of colors. Ranges in this line come with two burners, an oven and a French top. The Molteni Professional 145 Evolution can be further upgraded to include smooth or ribbed planchas or two additional burners.

Unlike other induction ranges where the cooking surfaces are clearly marked and all cooking must occur over these areas, the S90 range line from Electrolux offers full surface induction cooking. This range features four adjustable

Vulcan Heavy Duty
Plancha Gas Range



temperature zones, each powered by its own 5-kW induction coil. Seamless transitions between zones allows for maximum cooking flexibility with minimal dead zones. When maneuvering pots along the 33-x-29-inch cooking surface, chefs can cook foods at four different temperatures simultaneously.

Electrolux also has introduced thinner induction ranges for more-compact kitchens that have two adjustable temperature zones. Like the larger models, a chef can put a pan on almost any spot on the surface and make contact with the induction electromagnetic cooking field.

One last consideration is how to keep the range clean. Some of the latest ranges incorporate sealed and raised burners, and even the grates detach for cleaning in a dishwasher. But what about cleaning under the range?

A solution that appeared at the 2011 National Restaurant Association Show is StoveShoes. Essentially coasters made from the same high-density, high-impact and chemical-resistant material used in heavy industry in place of steel, Stove-

Shoes is designed to fit under the legs of commercial ranges. While extremely durable (they can withstand pressure of up to 4,000 pounds per square inch), the surface is extremely smooth. So when kitchen staff need to clean beneath the range, it can easily be moved over even seams in tiled floors. Each slider also has a small drain hole that allows for cleaning agents to be used without buildup. Mop strings won't get caught in them as they do in casters.

Manufacturers Directory

- Blodgett Corporation, (800) 331-5842, www.blodgett.com
- Comstock-Castle Stove Co., (217) 223-5070, www.castlestove.com
- Electrolux Professional, (866) 449-4200, www.electroluxusa.com/professional
- Jade Range, (800) 884-5233, www.jaderange.com
- Molteni, (646) 509-1454, www.molteni.com
- The Montague Company, (800) 345-1830, www.montaguecompany.com
- Viking Commercial, (714) 992-2482, www.vikingcommercial.com
- Vulcan Food Equipment Group, (502) 515-5061, www.vulcanequipment.com

MARKETPLACE AND CLASSIFIEDS



SHARPER THAN EVER WITH EDGECRAFT Maintain your edge with EdgeCraft Corporation's Model 2100 Chef'sChoice® Commercial Diamond Hone® Knife Sharpener. This compact sharpener quickly, safely and easily puts a razor-sharp edge on commercial cutlery. The patented three-stage sharpener's new technology handles fine-edge and serrated knives. The sharpening module is removable and dishwasher safe. Now available with an optional Asian-style, 15-degree edge module. www.edgecraft.com



RUGGIERO SEAFOOD INC. The rich, delicious flavor of Ruggiero Seafood's Fisherman's Pride® brand Calamari makes it the perfect ingredient for all your traditional seafood dishes. Red Label Calamari is caught in North America and processed in our state-of-the-art facility. Naturally tender, Loligo Pealei has very little shrinkage when prepared. Look to the Fisherman's Pride® Red Label for the highest standards of quality, consistency and availability in tubes, tentacles and cut rings. Visit www.ruggieroseafood.com, or call (866) CALAMARI.

CULINARY NEWS

Want the latest culinary news?

Visit the Chef's Stirrings blog at ChefMagazineBlog.blogspot.com for regular updates.

Or sign up at www.chefmagazine.com for the Chef's Stirrings e-newsletter of monthly news highlights from the blog.

SOFTWARE

**Save 3-8% on food costs
Guaranteed with Chef Tec!**



Chef Tec



1-800-447-1466 • www.ChefTec.com