

## Equipment

## New product wrap-up

**E**very year, equipment manufacturers introduce new products designed to help operators work more efficiently and profitably. This year was no exception. Here's a look at some of the forces that are driving these new products and the problems they can solve.

## TECH SUPPORT

Today, advances in technology mean more than just putting an electronic control panel on an oven. Technology reaches every part of the operation: front of house, back of house and nowadays, even "outside the house" to solve operator problems, such as the disposal of used cooking grease. Rather than hauling it away (or even worse, just dumping it down the drain), Springboard Biodiesel's BioPro lets the operator turn it into something useful. The BioPro takes waste cooking oil and converts it into high-grade biodiesel fuel that powers diesel-engine automobiles, for an estimated cost of around \$1 per gallon.

Back of house, maintaining proper and constant temperature control is essential to promote food safety and prevent spoilage. So the Kitchen Data Systems line from Winston Industries combines a variety of automatic and hand-held

thermometers that continuously monitor and adjust temperature on both hot and cold holding and cooking equipment. Alerts are sent out via text, phone or e-mail, and temperature readings are sent to a secure website for record keeping.

In the front of house, waste—whether in food or beverages—is always a costly issue. To help cut down on wasted wine, there's the Pod Bar from Bermar, a "wine by the glass" cabinet with an integrated system that can preserve both still and sparkling wine up to 21 days. Individually controlled chambers allow the wines to be stored and served at proper temperature.

## OLD DOGS, NEW TRICKS

With major equipment, the key selling point in a new product sometimes isn't a complete revamp; it's just a matter of taking an existing product, rethinking it and redesigning it for increased efficiency. For example, one of the drawbacks to using heated merchandisers is the fact that they're always on, consuming energy. The new Heated Zone Merchandiser from Hatco delivers overhead heat only when product is present



HATCO'S HEATED ZONE MERCHANDISER

shelves in Cambro's Camshelving Elements line are made from a noncorrosive composite material that the manufacturer claims is as strong as steel, and up to 60 percent lighter. Antibacterial protection is permanently embedded in the shelf plates.



VULCAN'S POWERFRY FRYER

Almost every kitchen has a fryer (or two or three)—most of which are heavy energy users and heat producers. In Vulcan's VK PowerFry fryers, the heat exchange system is redesigned so that the oil is heated not only from the exchange tubes but also from the sides and back of the unit, making for more efficient heat transfer to the food. The 45-lb. PowerFry models are Energy Star-qualified.

## KEEPING IT SIMPLE

Making things easy—both for the customer and for staff—is another motivator behind many new products. Anything that lessens cleaning and maintenance costs is a plus for the operator...and makes a positive impression on the diner. That's the reasoning behind the AutoDoor System from Rubbermaid. It's a hands-free door-opening system that lessens the need for cleaning the restroom doors and also reduces the chance of contamination.



RUBBERMAID'S AUTODOOR

On QSR menus, nothing's been hotter this year than oatmeal. But making oatmeal from scratch isn't always an option. The solution? Instant oatmeal dispensers, introduced this year by both Bunn and Wilbur Curtis. Similar in size and design to an instant cappuccino maker, the machines dispense a premeasured mix of instant oatmeal and hot water. Push-button controls allow them to be used front of house as well as behind the counter.

—TOM O'BRIEN