



Smart Preparation

From Chefs for Chefs

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Across the world, and in every type of cuisine, the concept of ‘modern scratch’ cooking is gaining momentum in the chef community. New, convenient products and more efficient ways of working are helping chefs with the challenges of running 21st century kitchens without compromising on creativity or quality.

So what’s behind the trend?

The need for Speed

Slow service is one of the most frequent complaints of guests and, for many, it’s their number one issue.* Even at formal dining occasions guests want **prompt service** without big gaps between courses.

Menu Choice vs. Capability

Also, over the past decade **guests’ expectations** of the number of dishes on a menu have almost doubled.* Yet, the number of staff in an average kitchen team has remained the same or in some cases reduced. These days it can be more difficult to bridge the gap between the choices guests demand and the resources available.

**Harris Research 2009*

Convenience without Compromise

To keep up, many modern chefs now accept the role that more **convenient ingredients** can play in their kitchens. For many it’s about the need to save time; beginning the preparation of a dish one or two steps further along the cooking process. Chefs are choosing **professional ingredients** that vary in their level of convenience from partially to completely ready-to-use and are making their choices based on immediate need.

For example, many agree that a stock is best made from scratch. Sometimes however, the bones used have less meat or are of poor quality, causing the finished stock to suffer. Quite simply, a **convenience stock can perform better**, with more consistent results and with none of the associated health and safety issues. Of course, professional ingredients are **no substitute for talent or training**. Kitchen staff need to be as skilled to handle professional ingredients as they do raw ingredients. But, with the time saved, their skills and creativity can be developed further.

Smart Preparation Checklist

Simple, smart preparation can reduce stress, time and costs

- **Economies of Scales** An effective work schedule for each week will calculate the optimum MEP production batches. It will also take into account shelf life and quality.
- **Must Have Dishes** Don’t waste time and skill creating menu essentials that may not be fully appreciated by guests. Convenience products can help to create these dishes consistently.
- **Mise en Place** Season the dishes/during the mise en place. This reduces the pressure on staff when the dishes are served, making it possible to serve the same number of guests with a smaller team. Distinguish between production and serving stages when developing the menu.
- **Cleaning Up** Who cleans what, and how often? Clearly indicate which cleaning jobs should be carried out by which team member. Use the table in this brochure to check if you are allocating tasks smartly.
- **Flexible Staffing** Help the team to be flexible by making sure each can work at every station. This makes the operation better equipped to cope with personnel changes. On quieter days implement a "job swap" ask the pastry chef trade places with the garde-manger for the day.
- **Time and Motion** Allow the team to calculate the number of steps they make and see if improvements to the kitchen layout can be made. Consider the results annually and calculate how much time could be saved.
- **Second Opinions** Consider bringing in an independent consultant or chef to observe your kitchen at work. They can analyse your ways of working can come up with some fresh thinking.
- **Ask for Ideas** Create an ideas box and ask the team for ideas relating to efficiency. The idea that saves or makes the most money can win a prize.

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