



Target Catering helps the Speech House Hotel achieve its ambitious green goals

It's another business lunchtime in the Speech House Hotel's relaxed bar and delicious meals arrive quickly. Little do the diners know that new induction cooking appliances supplied and installed by Target Catering Equipment underpin their experience. Behind the scenes, in new efficiency, quality, green credentials, safety and profitability, change is even more marked...

Peter and Gill Hands bought the hotel in 2010 before updating it while carefully retaining the traditions of a much-loved business and cultural hub in the Royal Forest of Dean.

An approach by Business West introduced possible benefits from incentivised investment as a green business. After auditing and recommendations by Business West's Chris Springett, they identified Target Catering Equipment in Gloucester as possible equipment suppliers.

Impressed from the start

'From the start,' says Peter, David Pedrette, MD of Target Catering Equipment, impressed us. His responsiveness and thorough survey revealed opportunities for energy and other cost savings by replacing our old LPG-gas kitchen – and improved efficiencies through upgraded equipment and layout. After identifying our requirements and suggesting options, they demonstrated induction cooking at their showroom – including a party-piece where a £50 note remains undamaged between a working induction hob and a boiling pan!

The hotel already had 3-phase electricity that was underutilised in the belief that ease of use and controllability made gas best for cooking. Electrical

equipment had never been considered viable – a belief not helped by entrenched staff resistance to change.

The challenge

With projected savings verified by Chris Springett, the hotel management team approved Target's proposals and the required investment, supplemented by EU funding for improving energy resource efficiency. With a Green Business grant in place, installation began.

Peter again: 'Our old solid-top range generated lots of waste radiant heat because it, and our ovens, had to stay on 12–14 hours a day, in and out of service, with energy-guzzling electric fans running continuously.'

'There was also a continuously running wall-mounted gas grill over our fryers and poor kitchen workflow around mismatched units. And an inefficient hot pass without plating-up space for large functions. Food sometimes went out at less-than-optimal quality, having cooled rapidly before service.'

Peter and Gill were impressed by Target's thorough exploration of their requirements before suggesting options and arranging demonstrations. 'They knew exactly how to meet our requirements and were always very helpful. As a family business, we like working with family firms and keeping business local. Having David and Liz and the rest of the Target team just minutes away is reassuring.'

'There have been financial savings too, with the promise of more to come.'

We knew we'd chosen wisely

'Installation went smoothly,' recalls Peter, 'and our chefs took to the new equipment at once. After finding our feet, a great "coming together" on day two reassured us that we'd chosen wisely. In reality, you expect teething troubles, but to Target's credit there weren't any. The only niggle was a persistently failing oven lamp that the Target team and their supplier handled under warranty.'

The benefits

Describing a positive experience for the hotel team and its guests, Peter says: 'We've got first class equipment and better procedures without compromising quality. Our operation's quality has improved in many ways – from streamlined kitchen workflow and better presented food to faster service.'

There have been financial savings too, with the promise of more to come. As Gill Hands explains: 'It's difficult to precisely quantify fuel savings. For this we'd need to know amounts of fuel used, actual like-for-like sales and weather conditions. The unit costs of fuel also increased several times during the year.' That said, Gill's comparisons show worthwhile savings between 2011 and 2013 – particularly when rising unit costs and a long cold winter are considered. The quantifiable benefits clearly reflect moving from gas, efficiencies and energy savings due to the speed and responsiveness of induction cooking, and massively reduced use of electric ventilation. As well as the electricity cost, the cost of wastefully extracting already-heated air from the rest of the hotel has fallen too.'

'Ambient kitchen temperatures are much lower now and reduced fan use eliminates draughts,' adds Peter. 'Chefs occasionally describe the kitchen as cold – but I'm sure they'll like it in summer.'

As for operational improvements, the kitchen team loves the induction equipment's flexibility and responsiveness, and easier workflow over newly-levelled worktops. On the induction cooking station, round and square coils replicate the old gas range, cook twice as fast, use half the power and are more controllable. Importantly, less energy is wasted because hobs switch on and off automatically when pans are placed or removed. There are also new electric convection programmable grills and ovens under the main cooking surface and a new combi-oven on the end of the cook line. Centre stage on the main food prep island goes to the new 'rise and fall' Quick Therm Salamander grill. Because it produces no harmful combustion by-products, it didn't have to stay in the old gas grill's less-than-ideal position over the fryers.



Individually-switched lights on the refurbished hot pass keep food and plates at temperature, complementing the new equipment and helping chefs increase the already high food-quality standards for anything from light lunches to functions. As Peter explains: 'We can bake potatoes and meringues at different temperatures in the same oven. That's clever.'

Guests notice the difference

Guests are noticing differences and commenting positively on food quality and service speed too. Whether Peter and Gill are catering for a banquet or those business diners, they're sure induction cooking benefits guests. And though emphasising that they'd never hurry diners,

they know increased efficiency enables servicing more covers at busy times.

*'We'd
recommend
Target'*

Happy diners, chefs and owners reflect well on the new kitchen. As well as greater energy efficiency, it's also easier to clean and maintain – with labour-saving details such as a moveable wheel-mounted cook line.

Savings can be reinvested in guest facilities

The reduced ventilation requirement means the old ventilation stack will go – improving the hotel's appearance and cutting maintenance costs. What's more, guests won't have to endure the noise and vibration of the fan needed to meet gas safety regulations for dispersing fumes. Along with a planned biomass unit and other energy-saving measures around the hotel, it means substantial savings for reinvestment in guest facilities.

Into the future

Working with Target has cemented bonds between the businesses: Target's done product photography and video filming at Speech House; and the businesses collaborated to recycle the old LPG gas stove. After inviting 'bids' from the local community, Lydney Sea Scouts 'won' the equipment for their centre where it will see out its days working for local community groups.

As well as enjoying transformed operations and costs, the Hands are now ambassadors for Target, induction cooking and business greening. In April 2013, they even won Green Business of the Year in *The Forester's* annual Business Awards. No wonder UK hoteliers and overseas delegations come to see the equipment with a view to greening their kitchens.

Would Peter and Gill recommend Target Catering Equipment? 'Yes,' says Peter. 'Our relationship only strengthens and I've referred potential clients to them. We both agree that organisations such as Business West and Gloucestershire First should continue to showcase our success to a wider audience that will benefit from similar efficiencies and CO₂ reduction wherever food is prepared.' ■

More information

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