



## Making the Most of Foodservice Equipment



Speaker John DePaola (left) gave FARE attendees equipment-purchasing advice based on his years as managing principal of Foodservice Resources. DePaola has developed foodservice facilities for stadiums for the Washington Redskins, San Francisco Giants and other sports teams.

**Create Flexible Platforms.** Purchase equipment that can work with an evolving menu and product mix.

**Maintain Your Refrigeration.** Refrigeration accounts for more service calls than any other equipment category. Keep coils clean, check gaskets regularly and opt for a top-mounted system to keep the unit cooler and cleaner.

**Consider the Combi.** Countertop combi ovens are more practical for c-stores than their full-size counterparts. An entire menu can be cooked—and held—inside a combi oven. DePaola recommends units with boilers as opposed to boilerless, so long as you monitor and clean scaling.

**Advancements in Microwaving.** New microwave-absorbing ceramic plates rapidly cook and even brown foods in a standard microwave oven. The Silar microwave flatstone from Advanced Composite Materials bakes a fresh-dough pizza in 2 to 3 minutes—reducing the cooking time by 90%.

**Visual Merchandising.** Strong graphics, digital menu boards and flat screen displays can sell your food better than the food itself. The key is getting quality software and knowing how to use it.

**Rapid Cooking.** Companies such as TurboChef have unveiled some impressive rapid-cook ovens ideal for sandwiches and pizzas. Keep in mind, however, that such ovens should be used for immediate-consumption items, not food to be held.

**Prep Your Panini.** Fast-casual operators pre-heat panini in hot food cabinets prior to grilling to activate the fat, cook evenly and quickly.

—Abbie Westra

## Operators Implored to Stay Proactive on Legislative, Social Issues

With nutrition, immigration and food-safety legislation looming, as well as social causes such as sustainability, foodservice operators must so on the offensive, said panelists at the “Mandates, Regulations and Social Causes.”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration are the “usual suspects,” said panelist Lou Cooperhouse (below), director of Rutgers Food Innovation Center at Rutgers University. But operators should also pay attention to local, state and county legislation and whether their mandates supersede national laws.



At the same time, there are a slew of third-party regulatory bodies—from ISO to ServSafe to NSF—that add to the patchwork of industry rules and standards. And Walmart has taken it to the next level with self-regulation: It is requiring its tens of thousands of suppliers to fill out a survey on their carbon footprint.

Be it industrywide or within one company, the benefit of self-regulation, said Cooperhouse, is it allows the industry players to set the standards before the government does. The downside, as evident in the recent peanut-butter crisis, is a lack of accountability paired with murky traceability.

The best way to navigate the maelstrom, said Cooperhouse, is to partner with government, trade associations, academia and industry experts to voice your opinion and stay abreast of the issues.

Fellow panelist Andy Revella, president of The Cookery & Food Institute, urged operators to abolish the “folklore that has plagued our industry for generations.” First, he said, get educated on food safety, nutrition, taxation and other issues affecting foodservice, and then think about the “unintended consequences” of regulations, laws and mandates and how they may affect your business and customers.

—Abbie Westra