



What's New at Hoteres?

By Mary Esther Treat

Known for its innovative unveilings, Hoteres in Japan attracts a good deal of attention. Here's one consultant's take on what she saw.

There's a lot to learn out there in the big world. Cultural differences manifest themselves in food and food preparation – and therefore in local foodservice equipment. And while one culture may never adopt the foods or the styles of another culture, there are applications that can be transferred from one to another.

At the Hoteres 2008 show in Tokyo in March we saw a number of innovations, some of which might have applications for consultants around the world. We suggest websites but many of the Japanese websites do not have English translations. I had some luck using Google's translation; to use, right click on a page and near the bottom of the menu is "Page Info" and at the end of its menu is "Translate Page into English". Click on that.

Cool it

The coolest piece of equipment I saw this year was all gimmick, but potentially interesting as a foundation for a franchisable business concept that would give Cold Stone a run for its money: the teppan ice cream maker. The idea is modeled after a teppan, or teppan-yaki grill, but meant to produce cold foods. A shop would use the machine to make made-to-order ice cream, sorbet, and so on, with a -30°C chilled plate, enabling completely custom, made-to-order frozen treats. The operator pours sweetened liquids (a gelato or ice cream base, or sorbet base), is able to add fresh fruit or other items at the customer's request, and scrapes everything together teppan-yaki style to produce a scoopable, lickable treat. I think it would translate readily to the U.S. market, even if nobody gets the reference to that style of cooking, just because it's so dramatic to watch ice cream made before the customer's eyes in just a few seconds. <http://blog.jagaimo.com/about.aspx>

Cut it



High production food facilities are the focus of much that was on display at Hoteres this year. Large quantity meal production requires big machines that can slice and dice mountains of vegetables. Most restaurants don't need to do that, but contract feeders might, schools and universities might, and hospitals might. We saw a number of machines that are more oriented to heavy production, and often they are food product specific, such as a radish slicer, or a cabbage shredder. Anything you want to peel, slice or dice can be done at high volume in machines from Dremax. Their website offers a video of white radish being sliced for *kimchi*, Korea's national dish: <http://youtube.com/watch?v=6s25p6dGRhA>. If you get to that video, you'll also see selections for other videos like the one on a strawberry processor (4,000 berries/hour!).

Stir it

The Japanese can automate anything. We saw two different and entertaining ways of moving food in a wok. One involved a pig tail plus that revolved in a wok, plus a stationary spatula, as the wok rotated, effectively turning over all

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the food being cooked. See it at http://www.mik-net.co.jp/e/product_e/robo_chef.htm There's a video on the website. The second was an arm that raised and moved the wok back and forth, similar to a chef flipping an omelet.

Fry it

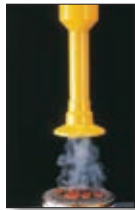
While much of the Japanese equipment did not have the graceful design and styling we saw in Milan, one piece stood out – the Hicook Debut electric fryer is a knock-out. <http://www.hicook.com/english/fryer2.html#DEBUT> Its shiny, two-pedestal base and lovely curves give it a look of real elegance. The Debut cooks small batches that move horizontally in a track that is sectioned in order to fry multiple products. Interestingly, the company's other products are all large production machines that are more typical of food factory design.

Roast it



Communal cooking and dining at a smokeless roaster built into the center of a table was represented by several manufacturers. You can see the roasters at www.u-kyouto.com, <http://www.rinnai-roaster.com/>, or <http://www.shinpo.co.jp/e/tech/index.html>. The colorful hoods below go with these small cookers – one over every table.

Individual ventilation



Meant for tabletop cooking, tubes in bright crayon colors offer individual table ventilation. Each unit can be raised and lowered as needed. They were graceful and functional and fun. We may not want to adopt the center-table grill style dining popular in Asia, but the ventilation system is a nice solution. For a picture, visit www.no1-santa.com/arm.html.

Waste

The Japanese have devised a number of ways to deal with trash and/or food waste. Purpose (www.Purpose.co.jp) has a trash cooker that takes about 220 lbs of food waste, heats it to kill microorganisms and reduces it to 1/5th its original size in 14 hours. The first North American system introduced by Stero under license with an Asian company made its debut this spring.

Step up

Here's something new – an “air vacuum mat” that literally sucks the salt, dirt and debris off your shoes as you walk over it. It's built into the floor – you can see a photo at <http://www.paionia.co.jp/product/002.html> (the website is in Japanese only). It's meant for clean factories, but anyone who puts mats down to catch winter sidewalk salt and sand could see its usefulness. 🌐

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