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Stories

Tuscany OAKBROOK

If homemade pasta and fresh seafood are two of your specialties, you'd better be able to deliver the goods. And nowhere is the pressure greater than at Tuscany in Oak Brook, Illinois. Tuscany is one of Chicago-based Phil Stefani Restaurants, a group of popular Italian restaurants offering exciting, authentic cuisine.

To maintain its reputation for fine food, Tuscany relies on the best possible cooking equipment in its kitchen. It's no surprise that Keating pasta cookers and fryers are part of the equipment mix.

At Tuscany, the kitchen staff turns out approximately 750 entrees for dinner (as well as 200 or so entrees at lunch). To meet these high-volume demands, the restaurant relies on its Keating Pasta Plus pasta cooking system.

"It's simple," says Claudio Ulivieri, Vice President of Phil Stefani Restaurants. "Our Pasta Plus system cooks a lot more pasta than we could do in stockpots on a range."

From L-R: Phil Tondelli (Keating Vice President Sales and Marketing), Claudio Ulivieri (Vice President, Phil Stefani Restaurants), Eliza Keating (President, Keating of Chicago, Inc.), Mark Losurdo (Losurdo, Inc.), Keith Smith (Keating Regional Manager).

"Not only is the Pasta Plus system faster, it turns out a better quality product," says Jonathan Draper, Executive Chef.

"There is a big difference in quality between what we get from our Pasta Plus and what we would get from rangetop cooking," he says. "With a gas range, only a fraction of the heat from the burner transfers to the water. Pasta cooked this way soaks up much more water while it sits in the pot waiting for the water to heat. In our Pasta Plus unit, it is constantly filling itself with hot water, so recovery time is instant. We get a much more appetizing product."

Hooked up to a kitchen's water line, the Pasta Plus system brings tap water to a rolling boil in less than ten minutes. The system's patented cook cycle maintains the boil throughout the cooking process.

"The water changes continuously, so each new batch is cooked in clean, fresh water, not starchy," says Ulivieri.

The double-well unit allows one batch to continue cooking while another is lifted and drained.

And, while Tuscany relies on their Pasta Plus system solely for pasta production, it also allows operators to boil seafood, poach eggs and blanch vegetables.

The wide variety of pasta prepared at Tuscany requires different cooking times in their Pasta Plus unit. For instance, the angel hair pasta used in the Capellini D'Angelo al Pomodoro (pasta with fresh tomato sauce and basil) takes only three to four minutes to cook from its raw state, while such other dried pastas as spaghetti and fettuccine require cook times of from seven to ten minutes.

Stuffed pastas, such as their pear and parmigiano-stuffed Ravioli Pera alla Giorgio, is precooked ahead of time for four minutes, shock-cooled in ice water, held and reheated for two to four minutes as needed on a per-order basis.

"As busy as we get at dinner time, this quick finish time for our stuffed pastas allows us to make sure each order is done to perfection," says Draper.



Serving Those Who Serve The Very Best



Also bringing perfect consistency to Tuscany's kitchen are two Keating gas 14BBHI Instant Recovery® fryers.

These fryers, both with input ratings of 109,000 Btu, recover their temperatures before the end of the cooking cycle. This means no time-wasting waits between batches and no excess saturation from food soaking up too-cold oil.

Keating fryers offer a patented system of high input burners and heat transfer surfaces, ensuring quality cooking. They also feature a highly polished #7 stainless steel vessel and a true Cold Zone, both of which help reduce shortening breakdown and extend oil life.

At Tuscany, one of the fryers is dedicated to the production of calamari, a popular appetizer. Because of its flavor characteristics – and the need to keep that flavor

- from transferring to other foods – calamari production is confined to one unit, says Draper.

- The other fryer is used for several menu items, including roast potatoes, a side dish served with many of the entrees. Potatoes are blanched in the fryer to a three-quarter state of doneness and are finished off in the oven.

- Other fried items include Costoletta di Vetello Lucchese – a breaded veal chop served with fresh tomatoes, mozzarella and arugola – as well as chicken and veal parmigiana. The staff also cooks fried vegetable garnish in the second fryer.

- The fryers are located side-by-side, with a Keating Whirl-O-Swirl-A-Way® filter system at the end of the battery. A dump station above the filter actually is used as a work station for breading food before frying.

- The Whirl-O-Swirl-A-Way system is a hands-free way of purifying oil through a multi-layered filter. The system features a 5 G.P.M. pump and the capacity to filter up to six fryers of the same capacity.

- Draper is quite pleased with Keating fryers and filters. "We've never had any problems with this equipment," he says.

- No break downs, instant recovery times, consistent cooking and ease of use are just some of the reasons Draper and the rest of Tuscany's



From potatoes to calamari to veal, Tuscany uses Keating fryers to prepare many different menu items.

kitchen staff count on Keating equipment for production of the best possible food, batch after batch.

SUMMARY

- The speed of Keating Pasta Plus pasta cookers allows Tuscany to prepare many different types of pasta per order, rather than doing bulk amounts ahead of time and holding them.
- The Pasta Plus' starch overflow drain keeps water fresh before, during and after each batch.
- Keating Instant Recovery® fryers recover their temperature before the end of the cooking cycle, allowing the next batch to load right away.
- Tuscany's Whirl-O-Swirl-A-Way® filter system allows hands-free filtration of the oil from one fryer while the other fryer is operating.

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Formerly an equipment editor with Restaurants & Institutions, Rob is now a freelance writer.

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Different varieties and types of pasta are easily prepared in Tuscany's two 20" Keating Pasta Plus Cookers and Rinse Tank.