

# Selecting the right GRIDDLE

Selecting the Right Griddle  
Griddles provide operators with a versatile cooking platform for a wide variety of applications. Griddles are flexible, user-friendly and are ideal for a broad range of menu solutions, including breakfast, lunch, and dinner. While griddles may be flexible and versatile, not all griddles are alike. When choosing the right griddle for a given application, operators must make choices that best suit their needs, the needs of their customers and their budget. Griddles can be differentiated in seven major ways: utility type, power rating, style, size, control type, surface finish, and the griddle plate thickness.

The first step in selecting a griddle is choosing between gas and electric. Some locations are limited by what is available so the operator may not have a choice. While other locations have regulatory restrictions, for example malls and airports often do not allow gas, thus the operator must use electric. Utility cost varies by geographic area, so economics weigh heavily in this decision. The prevailing perception is that electric griddles are 'cleaner' while gas



griddles are less expensive to operate and cook faster. Griddles come in various BTU (gas) or KW (electric) ratings. Higher BTU or KW equals more power for quicker preheat and faster recovery. However, the amount of power has little to do with maximum temperatures or within temperature consistency. Nor does higher ratings have much to do with energy usage. The type of controls and the griddle thickness are far more important to operational efficiencies and temperature consistency than BTU or KW ratings.

In terms of styles, or platforms, griddles are available in floor models with oven bases, counter top models which are typically set on low profile refrigerated cabinets, or built-in models which are 'dropped' into a counter. Each has their own advantages.

Floor models usually have oven bases and provide additional cooking and holding capacity. Floor models also 'fit' into cooking batteries along

side other cooking equipment with a common gas manifold, front rails and back shelves. Built-in griddles are usually used in demonstration kitchens, for Tepanyaki or Japanese style grilling.

Counter top griddles offer several advantages. When used on refrigerated bases, counter top griddles are ideal for 'short order' applications. The chef has the cold food right where he needs it - when he is ready to cook it. Counter top griddles are often used together with matching counter-top open-burner ranges, char broilers and counter top fryers. Counter top equipment also provides great flexibility for menu changes due to their modularity.

Choosing the right size griddle is the function of two variables.





Demand capacity and available space. Griddles are typically available in left to right widths of 24" to 72" in one-foot increments while depths are either 18" or 24".

Selecting the right control is probably the most important choice of all. Choices include manual, thermostatic, snap-action or solid-state. Manual controls have values that allow the operator to turn the flame up and down as desired. Manual controls are less expensive to purchase, offer simplicity, and provide maximum operator flexibility. The major down side of manual controls is maintaining precise temperatures. Thermostatic controls have a modulating flame, are easy to use and provide the operator with 'cruise control'. They maintain much greater surface temperature consistency at a reasonable price point. The down side of thermostatic controls is the ability to recover under heavy product loads. For

example, if the griddle is loaded with frozen hamburger meat, the surface temperatures may drop up to 50°F, which could be of concern with regard to food safety.

Snap-action controls have a full on or completely off flame. They provide maximum temperature consistency, quick recovery under heavy product loads, and are preferred by chains because of food safety temperature issues.

Temperatures are usually maintained in the +/-5° to 10°F range. Solid-state controls are similar to snap-action controls with even greater temperature consistency at a still higher price point.

Griddles plates come in thickness of anywhere from ½" to 1" or more. The thicker the griddle plate the longer the pre-heat and cooling time but the greater the temperature consistency and faster recovery under heavy demand. Thinner plates do not provide

the durability of thicker plates and will warp with time and heavy use.

Griddle surfaces are either flat or grooved. Their finish is either polished or chrome plate. Flat surfaces of polished steel are far more common for most applications and deliver consistent performance and reliability. Grooved griddles provide 'score marks' much like a char broiler while the excess grease is channeled into the grease trough.

However, grooved griddles do not work for pancakes, eggs, omelets and similar products, and are difficult to clean. Chrome plated griddles provide superior clean ability and minimize heat radiation but great care must be taken to clean and use properly to maintain the integrity of the plated surface. Once they become scratched and nicked they are more difficult to clean.

Lastly, the operator must weight these choices against his budget constraints. And not unlike most purchases, you usually get what you pay for. Considering the high cost of labor and potential liability of serving improperly cooked foods to paying customers, operators are wise to spend a little more for quality, efficiency, and precise controls.

Submitted by David Warneke  
Vice President of Sales & Marketing  
Bakers Pride Oven Company