



Here's what you should know about Commercial Microwave Ovens before you buy:

Commercial microwaves are approved by organizations like Underwriters' Laboratories (UL) and the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF). These certifications are important because they limit a foodservice operator's liability should the microwave be the cause of disaster, such as fire. Insurance carriers typically will not cover these incidents if they are caused by a consumer microwave used in a foodservice kitchen. The NSF designation indicates that the microwave is certified sanitary, easy to clean and designed so that it will not harbor bacteria.

Brands: Amana, Hobart, Panasonic, Sharp.

Duty: Light; Medium; Heavy

Light-duty commercial microwaves are best for warming bakery items, sandwiches and similar items in coffee shop and convenience store-type operations. In addition to those jobs, medium-duty commercial microwave ovens can handle some back-of-the-house needs, such as warming soups, sauces and other heavier items. Heavy-duty commercial microwaves, which may offer steaming or convection capabilities, are designed for boost-heating full entrees or cyclical reheating of items in high-volume applications.

Cooking Power (in Watts): Available in 1,000 or less; 2,000 or less; 3,000 or less; or more than 3,000

Most commercial microwave ovens run about 1 cubic foot in capacity, although some heavy-duty units are as large as 1.7 cubic feet or more. Light-duty commercial microwaves usually offer around 1,000 Watts of cooking power, while medium-duty units fall into the 1,500- to 2,000 Watt range. Some heavy-duty commercial microwave ovens are available with cooking power as high as 3,000 Watts and are large enough to accommodate two standard size, 4-inch deep steam table pans side by side. Higher wattage provides more cooking power than lower wattage, shortening cook time.

Finish: All stainless steel; Stainless-steel front with painted metal exterior

Heavy-duty commercial microwaves normally have stainless steel inside and out for durability and cleanability. Painted metal finishes are typically reserved for medium- and light-duty microwaves.

Turntable: Available on some models

While this useful component is helpful in achieving evenly heated food, it can prove troublesome when it comes to simple maintenance and cleaning the microwave interior to meet sanitation requirements. Typically manufactured of glass, turntables are easily broken.

Controls: Dials; Touchpads

Touchpad controls often offer anywhere from 10 to 100 programmable options; some with up to 10 preprogrammed functions. Commercial microwaves equipped with simpler dial controls feature lower price points and are not programmable.