

Understanding Spare Parts

Commercial catering equipment is engineered for hard work, but there are parts which have a finite life and need replacing eventually. Hopefully, a part that is nearing the end of its working life will be spotted by a regular service visit from an engineer who will be able to visually check items such as door gaskets or use technical testing equipment to spot impending trouble on switches or pumps.

For some caterers, cost is an issue on every aspect of purchasing and so when the cost of a spare part and fitting it is given by the inspecting engineer, there is a temptation to see if there is a cheaper way of effecting the repair.

The first and most important point is that if the item which needs a spare part is gas-powered then it has to be done by an engineer who has the official CORGI certification. That means the engineer has been properly trained to work on commercial gas appliances. It is illegal for anyone else to touch commercial gas equipment and that includes a CORGI registered engineer whose registration is only for domestic equipment.

With electrical or mechanical spare parts, few restaurant chefs have the time or knowledge to source and fit, but large hotels often have a general maintenance man who can do jobs like unblock drains, mend damaged furniture, fix a light fitting on the wall and knows how to restart the boiler if the pilot light goes out. There is the temptation to save money by buying a spare part independently and having the maintenance man fit it. Or it might be that there is a general electrical business in the town who has a service engineer who says "a switch is a switch – they are all the same" and offers a cheaper price than a trained kitchen engineer.

There are also companies who have long recognised that the cost of spare parts on all kinds of electrical and mechanical equipment is a business opportunity. They have recognised the most common spare parts needed from the popular manufacturers and buy in a limited range in bulk to earn a discount they can use as a competitive advantage.

Manufacturers of commercial catering equipment are no different to any manufacturer and will buy in some components from a specialist supplier. An oven manufacturer is not going to make its own door seals or printed circuit boards. Mail order spare part suppliers know this and will buy the popular components direct to buy cheaper than through the kitchen equipment manufacturer. For a manufacturer to hold every spare part in stock no matter how rarely it goes wrong carries with it a cost that the independent spare part company will not have.

Spare parts in the commercial kitchen market are just like car spare parts. There are the branded parts supplied through the manufacturer and generic parts which a third-party supplier will offer as a suitable alternative. Sometimes, but not always, buying a generic spare part is cheaper. Most times, but not always, the generic spare part will work. But while that sounds an attractive route to buying spare parts, avoiding the original equipment manufacturer carries with it risks.

The independent parts supplier will be spares for the popular makes and all the parts which regularly wear out, but it is unlikely to stock all spare parts. Neither is it likely to have the same depth of spare part knowledge as the original equipment manufacturer. The spare part may be listed in a catalogue as being for a particular piece of kitchen equipment, but it might not be the exact same component that the manufacturer was using, so the durability of the replacement part may not be as good as the original. This is very important when the spare part is a generic one, not from the manufacturer.



Even more fraught with risk is buying spare through internet sites. In addition to the difficulties already outlined, there is no one to talk to and component part numbers change frequently. A part that fits a five-year-old piece of equipment may not fit a four-year-old version.

How to find out more about Spare Parts

Email sales@justcatering.com
Web site www.justcatering.com

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