

Smooth operators

Top supermarkets are still investing in equipment, design and operations. Grocery Headquarters highlights some of the key spending areas.

BY KIM ANN ZIMMERMANN

If a grocer's merchandising display looks shabby or the cooking equipment breaks down so often that customers can't always count on getting a chicken for dinner, shoppers are turned off. That's why savvy supermarkets are still squeezing equipment and design upgrades into their budgets.

"We're seeing a bit of a turnaround, and customers are looking six to nine months out," says Jason Moles, field marketing manager for Eaton, Ohio-based Henny Penny. "They're even more likely to go ahead with an investment if they can get a payback, like saving on energy costs."

Dave Morrow, president of North Prairie, Wis.-based Zero Zone, agrees. "What grocers are looking for are ways to do it better, cheaper and with less energy," he says. "While new construction is down, we're seeing an uptick in remodels."

The deli and prepared foods counter are areas where grocers continue to invest as there are handsome margins to be made as shoppers dine in more often. "They need the right equipment to create restaurant-quality meals and keep shoppers coming back even when they have the money to venture back into restaurants," says Jack Scott, vice president of sales and marketing for Menomonee Falls, Wis.-based Alto-Shaam.

Here's a look at some of the equipment and design offerings that are inspiring supermarkets to invest:

CLEANING/SANITATION



CORRIGAN

Gumee, Ill.-based Corrigan's "Thunder Wash" sanitizing systems for produce, seafood, meat, poultry, misting and humidity equipment address food retailers' food safety concerns.

The system uses ozone—which company officials call "nature's cleanser"—making it very cost effective compared to other sanitizing meth-

ods. 800-462-6478, sales@corriganmist.com, www.corriganmist.com.



HYDRO SYSTEMS CO.

The ICS from Cincinnati-based Hydro Systems Co. is a fully portable battery-powered sanitation cart that delivers cleaner, safer stores by foaming, spraying or misting accurately diluted chemicals for cleaning restrooms, shopping carts and refrigerated cases. According to company officials, recent studies have quantified the ICS's cleaning superiority for sanitizing shopping carts and public restrooms.

The ICS eliminates cross-contamination issues by dispensing fresh chemicals on demand while using significantly less water and chemicals than traditional cleaning methods. 800-543-7184, www.hydro-ics.com.

COOKING/FOOD PREPARATION



ALTO-SHAAM

According to officials for the Menomonee Falls, Wis.-based manufacturer, the Alto-Shaam Combitherm is the only combi oven offering complete smoking capability in addition to standard combi cooking modes.

The patented smoking feature gives grocers the ability to smoke any product, hot or cold, with real wood chips. Retailers can expand their deli offerings—and profits—by adding real hardwood smoke flavor to many traditional items. Plus, the Combitherm will clear all smoke residue with just one cleaning cycle. www.alto-shaam.com, 800-558-8744.



COMSTOCK-CASTLE STOVE CO.

Individually built with precision and care by the most experienced stove builders in America, equipment from Quincy, Ill.-based Comstock-Castle Stove Co. is securely delivered in one to three weeks, company officials say. Sturdy welded frames and quality stainless steel with attractive hand-polished finishing are standard. www.castlestove.com.



GLOBE

Globe's premium slicers are unmatched for quality and reliability, built of stainless steel, which is unbeatable when it comes to sanitation, durability and