

Danish firm Lillnord's retarder provers are supplied in the UK by Norbake



facturer MIWE, with capacities ranging from a few racks, right up to 200 or more.

For example, MIWE's Garomat model has five programme sections: fast cooling, proofing interrupted, proofing retardation, proofing and the support phase, and has an operating temperature range of between -25°C and 45°C.

Many sizes fit all

Retarder provers are available in all sorts of shapes, sizes and specifications to suit bakeries' needs. Some models even have a built-in sleep mode, so bakers can essentially press the pause button on the production process.

Chris Huish, sales and technical manager at Mono, says one of the main benefits of retarder provers is that they take away the peaks and troughs in the level of production. Swansea-based Mono Equipment, part of the AFE Group, manufactures and supplies bakery equipment, and is the agent for its sister company Williams Refrigeration.

The firm supplies two different retarder provers aimed at craft bakeries – the 17-tray Crystal RPC1T (upright model) and the 10-tray RPCC2-18U (bench model). It also supplies the Modular DRP, designed for use in retail bakeries.

"You tend to get a better product, because you can set the retarders up for a very gentle proof," explains Huish. "You can develop more flavour and will get a nicer product."

The latest addition to Mono's range is the Doughmaster. The control panel is located in the door for ease of use and according to Huish all you have to do is set the time you want the dough ready for and the rest is done for you. "We do what we call a pod system, which is where the refrigeration unit is outside the cabinet rather than inside, so it's easier to maintain and there are no compressors or condensers hanging down inside," explains Huish. "There is also the option of a low-medium prove or low-medium retard if the customer wants it."

One thing to remember is if you're thinking about investing in a retarder prover, make sure it is a compatible size with your oven. "There's no point having 60 racks of proved bread if your oven only holds 30," says Charlesworth. EB

Case study: JG Fletcher & Son (Bakers)

J G Fletcher and Son (Bakers), in Wigan, purchased three 15-rack Lillnord retarder provers from Norbake – one in 2004 and two more in 2006 – and director Glyn Fletcher says he is considering purchasing more in the future. Fletcher says it was improving the quality of product that prompted his initial decision to invest in the units.

"We used to have older retarder provers, but we couldn't get a consistent product all the way along the rack," he explains. "With these new ones, the technology they have and the spread of the air flow around the product gives you a good quality product across the rack. They're absolutely superb."

He says that as well as improving product quality, they have also helped with costs. "They have cut our staffing needs down, particularly at weekends, because you're not starting from scratch; you've already got some stock that's ready to go."

His staff already work nights, but it has enabled them to come in four hours later than before. It also means that, as soon as the oven man comes in, he's got something to do. He bakes, and then the other staff come in and the production staff start later on.

Despite the fact the three units set him back around £75,000, Fletcher says they are cheap to run and have definitely saved him money in the long run. "All the latest technology means they don't use a lot of energy and are environmentally friendly," he says. "We've not only saved money, but have also helped the quality of our product."