

# Cook Away

Portable kitchen equipment lends momentum to caterers on the go

By Natasha Garber

**C**OOKING AT AN event site without benefit of foodservice facilities demands different planning than when they are close at hand, but the basics remain the same. Whether it's being served in a tent, on a field or in a museum lobby, catered food needs to look beautiful and taste delicious. Here we highlight innovative equipment that tends to the essentials, and then some.

## FIRST CHILL

Keeping perishables fresh is the first order of business for conscientious caterers.

With this in mind, Fort Wayne, Ind.-based Polar King International created its line of transportable coolers and freezers, according to director of marketing Todd Ellinger.

"Our most popular product is our 6-by-8-foot transportable trailer unit," he says. The fiberglass trailer, which is offered in cooler, freezer or combination models, is available with either a mounted generator or an extension cord. The unit comes with a 2-inch standard ball hitch and white spoke wheels and can be hooked to any towing vehicle.

"Our clientele is very widespread," says Ellinger, who recommends the unit for outdoor parties, fairs, festivals and sporting events. Rental companies can expect a solid return on investment from the trailers, he says, noting that the units "are 100-percent seamless both inside

and

out, so there is nowhere for air to leak in or out, resulting in longer life expectancy for the refrigeration hardware, and fewer repairs."

## HOT STUFF

When it comes to portable heating and cooking equipment, the culinary world is warming up to induction technology.

CookTek, based in Chicago, is at the forefront of induction, says director of marketing Patricia Cleary. Among new developments is an induction charger and disk that CookTek developed with Huntington Beach, Calif.-based foodservice equipment manufacturer Cambro. The disk plugs in and charges in several minutes, then is placed in the bottom of a cart for food transportation. According to Cleary, the device can keep food temperatures inside the cart at about 160 degrees Fahrenheit for up to an hour. The disk can replace canned cooking fuel, "which can be messy and may not hold heat well," or in-cart hot water pans that create moisture, which "makes the food horrible," Cleary says.

For cooking that sizzles safely, CookTek has introduced a portable induction wok. When paired with an induction-compatible wok pan, the unit surrounds food with heat for fast, even cooking, Cleary explains. She says the wok has proven ideal for environments that prohibit open flames.

## ALL ABOARD

For caterers looking for everything under one roof and on a set of wheels, Huntington Station, N.Y.-based Stewart's Mobile Concepts offers fully equipped kitchen



**Meals on wheels: Stewart's Mobile Concepts can customize mobile kitchens.**

trailers. The trailers are 20 feet to 53 feet long and can be outfitted with walk-in refrigerators, four-to-six-burner ranges, double-stack convection ovens, stainless steel preparation tables, dish machines and, of course, the kitchen sink. Make that multiple kitchen sinks—including three-compartment and hand sinks, says company director of sales and marketing Keith Futerman. Trailers can use power from an on-board generator, an external generator or a building source. A built-in exhaust hood and fire suppression system "conforms to board of health requirements across the country," he says, and cuts down on logistical planning in tents and other temporary event venues.

A caterer himself, Futerman says "the quality level [of Stewart's trailers] is higher because we know what works and doesn't work." He adds, "I know how to build a mobile kitchen so the equipment doesn't fall off the walls." ■

**RESOURCES:** CookTek, 888/COOKTEK, 312/563-9600; Polar King International, 800/752-7178, 260/428-2530; Stewart's Mobile Concepts, 800/919-9261

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**Wok out: CookTek's induction unit is ideal for stir-fry on the fly.**