

Would you like to know a hot tip, an inside scoop, a money-making strategy that the big players are taking advantage of? Of course you would and we're going to fill you in, but first, we need to talk about cars.

The Power of Information

You see, the last time you went shopping for a car you gathered two pieces of information from the sticker on the window – the price and the mileage. These two pieces of information were vital to your decision about whether you could afford to purchase the car. The price related to the immediate capital that you would have to shell out and the mileage told you how much the car would cost to operate. As you stood looking at the sticker, the purchase price probably dominated your thinking, but you paid attention to the mileage. You knew that you would have to deal with that cost-to-operate every week for as long as you owned the car. I think you'd agree that both the capital cost and the operating costs are good numbers to have.

Is Something Missing?

Okay, let's get back to your kitchen. Strangely enough, last time you purchased a new cooking appliance or refrigerator, you did so with only one piece of information, the capital cost. Why? Because, the cost to operate was not easily available. There was no "mileage" listed on the sticker – in fact, there was no sticker. Let's face it, you have no idea how much that appliance costs you in energy every month and unlike your car, the cost to fuel an appliance over its lifetime can be as much or more than the purchase price. One more little unnerving fact – you can line up two appliances that look the same and one might have a cost-to-operate that is double the other one.

So What's that Big Secret?

Several of the larger food service operations, primarily chains and supermarkets, realized the importance of knowing the operating costs and used their purchasing power to get that information. With the cost-to-operate in hand, they quickly surmised that it made good economic sense to purchase the most energy efficient appliances. While everyone else was making purchasing decisions on first-cost alone, these big players were seeing a bigger picture and gaining an operational advantage!

Get Ready to Share the Pie!

Thanks to the foresight of these industry leaders, manufacturers were able to innovate, create more efficient appliances and market those appliances. At the same time, the creation of standardized appliance test methods by the Food Service Technology Center allowed these innovations to be measured and documented. All that was missing was an easy method for letting everyone know which appliances were energy efficient – in other words, the sticker.

Energy Star® to the Rescue!

That sticker now exists for several categories of appliances and it's something you've seen before – Energy Star®! Two years ago at the NAFEM (North American Association of Food Equipment Manufacturers) show, Energy Star stickers were rolled out on solid door reach-in refrigerators and freezers. That was the first time that any commercial food service appliance had ever displayed an unbiased energy efficiency label. Suddenly it was easy for everyone to pick the appliances with the lowest cost-to-operate. At the upcoming NAFEM show this September, three more appliance categories will be added to that list – fryers, steamers, and holding cabinets.

It is now painless to make the same informed purchasing decisions that the big guys make and you didn't even have to break out a calculator! The best part is, the Energy Star folks work with the manufacturers to qualify their appliances for the program and they list all the qualifying models on their web site at www.energystar.gov.

Purchasing an Energy Star appliance might cost you a little more up-front capital, but you will get that money back in less than two years and you will have an appliance that performs better, dumps less heat in your kitchen, and is easier on the environment! Remember, these appliances exist because the big players figured out that they were cost effective. So, go Energy Star® and purchase like the pros!

These energy saving tips are offered by the Food Service Technology Center (FSTC), an unbiased food service resource center located in San Ramon, CA and funded by California utility ratepayers under the auspices of the California Public Utilities Commission. For more information on the FSTC and for our schedule of free energy efficiency seminars, please visit our website at www.fishnick.com.