



Pizza Hut has joined forces with Rancilio to provide customers with quality coffee. Pizza Hut's **Wayne Penfold** tells Tina Nielsen about their strong relationship

Anybody visiting a Pizza Hut restaurant in the UK today will notice a vast change from just a few years ago. Stores across the country have undergone a major makeover in look and feel. Three years into a major re-design program, stores have been refreshed and the menu extends beyond the lunchtime buffet and free salad bar offer that Pizza Hut restaurants are famous for. New items such

as low-calorie flatbread pizzas and gluten-free pizza bases have been introduced in order to

appeal to a broader dining public. A greater focus on the range of desserts and starters as well as a cocktail selection in selected restaurants is all part of the move to attract a wider customer base.

Part of the re-design program is a focus on the right equipment and Pizza Hut restaurants have begun installing Rancilio coffee machines in around 50 of its restaurants to date, from



Above left: Bryan Unkles of Cafeology, Wayne Penfold of Pizza Hut and Andrea Mascetti of Rancilio Group at Pizza Hut on The Strand, London, UK

PEOPLE AT THE CORE

Bournemouth to Glasgow, in order to guarantee a high-quality and consistent coffee offer. Wayne Penfold, procurement manager for Pizza Hut restaurants, says coffee is “a growing part” of the chain’s overall offer.

The coffee culture in the UK has been transformed in recent years; new independent operators have cropped up in the market as an increasingly discerning public has raised its expectations of the quality of coffee. Andrea Mascetti, the Rancilio commercial director, says that the UK today is more a nation of coffee fans than tea lovers. He says the boost for coffee is global and extends beyond the UK and Europe to the US and Australia.

“Partnerships are an important thing for us and we look to maintain a longer term relationship with suppliers”

He points to two areas where the UK is different from other countries. “One is product based – in the UK we see a country of milk-based coffee drink lovers while in the south of Europe we are more espresso-based,” he says. The other big difference is that the coffee shop is more social in the UK. “In Italy people drink an espresso at the bar and then they leave, but in the UK the coffee shop is also a place to meet people and to work.”

As the procurement manager of the restaurants, Penfold is responsible for introducing Rancilio coffee machines to the stores. He joined Pizza Hut restaurants in the summer of 2015. His remit includes a broad range of areas of

responsibility, including equipment, stationery and uniforms; restaurant services such as window cleaning and contract cleaners; as well as waste and recycling. “I also look after the procurement of all our drinks: alcohol, soft drinks and tea and coffee,” he says.

He has a background in the pub industry, which means he is well placed to see the difference between the pub restaurant environment and the casual dining setting of Pizza Hut. But, he says, the core task is the same. “Essentially it is about serving customers food and drinks in a great environment while trying to offer the best service, quality and consistency that you can,” he explains.

FIRM FOCUS ON PEOPLE

The Pizza Hut restaurants’ philosophy and strategy is very much focused on people, according to Penfold. “Our vision as a business is to be the most loved place to eat and work,” he says. “It covers staff and customer engagement and involves making sure that staff are really well looked after, are supported, trained and given the tools and expertise to be able to deliver fantastic service to the customers.” As he points out, if you provide great service you are more likely to see repeat customers.

The ethos of putting people at the centre of the business extends to the relationships with suppliers. “Finding suppliers of food and drink products with a similar mindset – about the quality, consistency and value for money, which is not always about price but the right piece of equipment and the right product, availability and supply chain – is critical,” says Penfold. “Partnerships are an important thing for



RANCILIO EQUIPMENT IN PIZZA HUT RESTAURANTS

- Depending on the needs of the different locations, Rancilio Group supply the most appropriate product for each location
- The Classe 9 in larger stores
- The Classe 7 with a tall version for take-away cups
- The Classe 5 compact in smaller stores with a tall version for take-away cups



us and we look to maintain a longer term relationship with suppliers in order to support our business and build on the success we have enjoyed over the last three or four years.”

Heavy investment has been ploughed into the business in what Penfold calls an exercise to bring the restaurants up to a standard expected by today's customers. An increasingly discerning dining public has showed higher expectations of their eating out experiences and with new competitors entering the market every day Pizza Hut restaurants are not being complacent. “Consumers are demanding a bit more, the leisure pound is a bit stretched and people are probably not going out as often as they used to and when they do go out they want to know that they are guaranteed to get value for money, a great experience and fantastic service,” says Penfold.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COFFEE

Offering a high-quality and consistent coffee proposition in the stores is vital to Pizza Hut restaurants. Last year, through Bryan Unkles, the managing director of ethical coffee company Cafeology and a UK agent of Rancilio, Pizza Hut restaurants decided to team up with Rancilio to introduce new coffee making equipment in the stores across the UK. “Coffee continues to grow in the UK and the secondary market place – restaurants rather than coffee shops – is probably the biggest area of growth so having the credible quality and consistent offer is important to us,” explains Penfold.

He says Rancilio ticked all of the boxes in meeting the requirements of the Pizza Hut restaurants and the feedback from teams across the country has been positive.

“The machines are very well made, easy to use and the specification we went for focused on ease of operation, delivering a good cup of coffee and one that is going to be future proof,” he says. “When we start driving more coffee sales for our restaurants we won't be worried about the machines' ability to keep up with that demand.”

An ever-expanding product portfolio and a degree of flexibility have allowed Rancilio to meet Pizza Hut's requirements. The last decade has seen major changes in the equipment it manufactures. “There has been one development focused on giving power to the barista, allowing machine operators to be more involved with the machine,” says Mascetti.

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“Rancilio Xcelsius system is the only technology that gives the barista a new kind of control over the temperature, one of the most critical parameters in making an espresso. Profiling the extraction guarantees a different result in the cup with a unique blend according the tastes of barista and his clients.”

There has also been an effort to increase automisation of certain devices, as not all operators are skilled baristas. “An innovative and automatic steam wand, a Rancilio Patent, allows the barista to easily heat and froth the milk using a mix of steam and air, to obtain a soft

and remarkably compact froth,” explains Mascetti.

UPDATED FUNCTIONALITY

New technology has introduced other elements such as touch display interfaces that make machines easier to use. Due to a relatively low demand for coffee at this stage, Pizza Hut has gone for a pod concept rather than using coffee beans and Rancilio has adapted the handles in order to accommodate the pods.

Demonstrating the true partnership element of the relationship, Rancilio has started adapting an existing model to meet the specific requirements of the smaller Pizza Hut restaurants. In adding the youSteam function to the Classe 5 compact model, Rancilio has amended functionality to suit these restaurants. “This is a smaller machine so it fits a smaller footprint. A smaller boiler also means lower energy usage. It means it will be a better fit for some of our smaller restaurants where we don't have the need for quite so much capacity,” says Penfold.

It is early days in the partnership and according to Mascetti, signing the deal was just the first step in a long process. “Our job started when we signed the agreement to supply the machines. I feel proud that Pizza Hut trusts us and our products,” he says.

Bryan Unkles from Cafeology, who introduced the two and who continues to oversee all installations and servicing, says the partnership is a success. “Pizza Hut has changed a lot over the last few years and there is a demand to get in high-quality coffee too. The partnership between the three of us is very healthy and it works well,” he says. ■

