Cooking with induction is not just good sense from an energy saving perspective, writes Kathy Bowry, it also makes for great theatre.

The considerable energy saving benefits of induction are now being amalgamated into kitchen ranges to keep running costs down and at the same time, induction cooking as a front of house feature (or for an event or for demonstration purposes) is growing in popularity as the advantages of easily ported counter top hobs is recognised.

Cooking in front of diners adds a point of difference that makes for a memorable experience and is likely to promote a return visit. These hobs are also eminently suitable for buffet service – simply plug in and go – and because they don’t pump out masses of heat there is no need for extensive kitchen-style ventilation.

James Carter of ICTC, UK agent for French company Mauviel, well known as the manufacturer of quality pots and pans for chefs says: “An increasing number of professional kitchens are moving from gas to induction. Why? The induction hob is quick, powerful, easy to clean and as responsive as the gas equivalent.”

Mauviel products are manufactured in Villedieu-les-Poeles, Normandy where the company is in 7th generation ownership and has a 180 year history of manufacturing. Mauviel has evolved traditional copper cookware by using materials that are more practical for today’s end user. Carter points out: “Traditional copper pans can’t be used on modern induction hobs. This is where you need the benefits of stainless steel – it is magnetic.” (If a magnet will stick to the base of a pan, it will work on induction; if not then new pans are the order of the day.)

The basic gastronomy shapes (saucepans, sauté pans and curved sauté pans) have all been copied in five multi layers of stainless steel and aluminium. Jason Atherton at his Pollen Street Social, which opened last year, has a selection of Mauviel pans from CCS.

The quality of Mauviel’s manufacturing is exceptional. “Each piece is hand inspected so the end user can be sure that the final article is ready for either kitchen use or table presentation. The ranges include pieces that are at the heart of restaurant service like traditional flambé burners and crépe pans. Mauviel’s product lines span traditional hand hammered copper pieces to the new multilayered steel pans.

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“Generally speaking the thinner the stainless steel pan the more likely your ingredients are to burn. This is where you need a well-constructed pan. Mauviel’s Grande Cuisine features an interior and exterior stainless steel lining for durability, food hygiene as well as for good looks. The key is that sandwiched in between layers one and five are three layers of aluminium to provide not only extra thickness for the pan, but also a more conductive metal than just stainless steel. This is important as you want the heat to be spread evenly throughout the pan, not just on the base. The five-layer construction continues up the side walls. Practically it is useful for making sauces, gravies and reductions as more of the ingredient is heated evenly compared to pans that only conduct heat from the base.”
When it comes to the actual cooking surface, CCS can supply a choice of single or double CookTek induction hobs from manufacturer MCS in various wattage options that simply plug into a 13 amp socket. MCS also supplies the beautiful range of Dolphin induction chafing dishes to set off presentation with style. According to Steve Snow of MCS the Dolphin chafing dishes came about because he was dismayed to see cheap containers and chafing dishes cropping up on buffets where he had supplied MCS hobs. “We decided to source our own quality serving dishes to complete the quality offering. MCS induction solutions can be found at UBS at Canary Wharf, the Fairmont Hotel at St Andrews and many other good, quality sites including hotel groups such as Hilton and Radisson who understand how important image is.”

He urges chefs to take a look at the CookTek Incogneeto under-stone counter mounted buffet warmer designed to be installed directly under stone or engineered stone counter tops. “After service simply remove the Incogneeto from beneath the counter and the chafing dish from the top and you have a completely clear counter. Nobody else is doing that.”

Snow also points to safety benefits when using induction. “You are not using dangerous flame cans. Only recently a hotel worker was badly burned by a gel can. Plus, with food holding at a precise +/- 1°C, induction holding prolongs the life of food.” CookTek hobs are available as counter top or drop in models designed specifically for buffet holding while a new 650 W version will cook a 2-3 egg omelette in 90 seconds.

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CCS has also teamed up with UK agent for Adventys hobs and Revol cookware, Signature. Revol’s stunning new cookware range is made from a technical ceramic that is 100% non-porous and compatible with all heat sources, including induction.

On the buffet, apart from its really eye-catching design and vibrant colours, Revolution is ideal for maintaining the temperature of dishes on induction hobs, while on the table the body continues to retain heat. An extensive range of coloured and clear glass lids are available, plus clever lid supports and accessories for buffet presentation.

According to Paula Sherlock, MD of Signature: “Revolution” is now a feature of buffet service at the Savoy. Thanks to the exceptional properties of this material, it is more shock resistant than traditional porcelain while its ultra-smooth enamel also provides exceptional longevity and means it’s easy to look after.”

The Adventys GL2-3000 induction hob is designed to operate with either 1x large rectangular pan (up to 1/1Gn size) or 2x small pans (up to 25cm diameter per pan). “Whether searing meat, braising, boiling, sauté, shallow fry, stir fry, casseroles, crepes, omelettes, eggs, melting chocolate, from production to pastry areas the hob is great for theatre cooking,” says Sherlock.