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Pizza Today Article: Lincoln FastBake™ Technology

The amazing thing about this great industry is the rate at which it continues to change and advance to meet the needs of our stores. For example, deck ovens were once the main type of oven we had to work with, these were and still are great ovens, but they are not for everybody. Their main shortcomings are the need to manually put the pizzas into the oven and then remove them when the oven operator deems the pizza to be correctly baked. In addition to this, deck ovens tend to require a bit more time to bake the pizzas than we would like. This has become increasingly important to many of the chains and independents that have a business necessitating fast delivery of the pizza from order to table. Much of this is driven by customers too short on time to wait for that magical ten-minute pizza. The oven industry responded roughly twenty years ago with the introduction of air impingement ovens, also known as “conveyor” ovens. With these new ovens we were able to effectively reduce the baking time to something in the 6 to 8 minute range, depending upon the size of the pizza and the number of toppings. Over the years we have seen continual improvements in these ovens so much so that the baking time of both thin and thick crust pizzas has been reduced to the 6 to 8.5 minute range. But this wasn’t enough for the oven companies. They have developed new baking technologies that make the baking time for pizzas ever shorter without loss of finished product quality attributes.

I was recently invited to Lincoln Foodservice Products, Inc., Ft. Wayne, Indiana to put their new “FastBake™” baking technology to the acid test. As many of you know, I am not an advocate of fast baking pizzas as there are generally just too many compromises on overall quality, but I have to admit, that this old dog saw some new and pretty impressive tricks done with the new Lincoln oven and baking profiles that makes me temper my words a whole lot more than I had in the past. With the new FastBake™ technology, we were able to bake everything from a plain cheese pizza to a seven topping pizza in just 4 minutes flat. With this new baking profile we never once saw even a hint of a gum line, and that seven topping pizza even had a nice dry appearance on the top rather than a “swampy” (wet) appearance that is so common when short baking times are employed. In switching gears to a thick crust pizza we made pizzas in the FastBake™ oven that had a firm and crispy textured crust that tasted absolutely great, OK, so I’m a bit partial to deep dish pizzas, but aside from that, the pizzas really were great, and the amazing thing was that the deep dish pizzas were baked to an internal temperature of 189F in only 6-minutes as compared to 8-minutes to bake the same pizza using a regular Lincoln air impingement oven with a traditional pizza baking profile. In a real life store situation the oven will be expected to bake more than just pizzas so we decided to try baking some calzones. We used the same set-up as was used for the deep-dish pizzas and we got a beautifully baked 12-inch calzone that would make a dinner for two. Time did not allow us to bake every type of product that we might encounter in a pizzeria during the day of my visit, but that work is still in progress, and if things continue as they

appear, I don't think there will be any problems with the new FastBake™ oven living up to its name in baking the vast array of products made in a typical pizzeria on a daily basis. If you are looking for a way to increase production, FastBake™ is a great way to achieve 25 to 30% greater production capacity without any changes to the oven footprint or hood size.

If you are in a position where you feel that the shorter baking time and/or increased production capacity, while not compromising on finished pizza quality, would be a benefit to you, contact your local Lincoln Foodservice Products representative or better yet, make a note to be sure to check out the Lincoln booth at one of the next pizza shows and decide for yourself if the 4-minute thin crust/6-minute thick crust pizza is fact or fiction, and if it has a place in your operation.