



ELKHART COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



Customer Profile:

With more than 13,000 students and 20 schools, the Elkhart Community School system in north-central Indiana is the largest public school district in Elkhart County. Its school kitchens and 140 foodservice employees stay busy serving age-specific menus for breakfast, lunch and after-school programs as well as operating a catering service.

Elkhart wanted to improve the foodservice programs at its three middle schools and two high schools due in part to growing demand—participation in lunch programs grew 5 percent between the 2009 and 2010 school years—and a desire to offer healthier food choices.

Challenge:

Elkhart's foodservice equipment was nearly 25 years old and school lunch participation rates were rising. In order to accommodate increased demand and offer healthier menu items, school leaders decided to replace fryers (and fried foods) while upgrading to more energy-efficient equipment.

Multiple menu cycles and removing fryers mandated the selection of versatile, easy-to-use equipment capable of handling a wide variety of foods and preparation methods, with future upgradability as needed.

The school district also wanted to save time in their cleaning processes. Scale buildup from hard water made it difficult to manually clean the existing appliances and could shorten equipment life over time. The addition of water softeners reduces scale buildup, which in turn can reduce labor and equipment repair costs.



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“We set out to improve food quality and reduce our energy use. The combi has helped us accomplish both of these goals. Now our students have healthier alternatives to the foods they love, and the district saves money by reducing its energy use. Everyone wins.”

**> Pam Melcher, director of food services
Elkhart Community Schools**

Solution:

Objectives:

- Replace aging foodservice equipment
- Improve food quality and serve more nutritious food options
- Decrease energy consumption and labor
- Reduce labor-intensive equipment cleaning as a result of hard water and scale buildup

Products Involved:

Hobart Combi® Ovens offer the flexibility to choose from convection, steam and combination modes to maximize equipment efficiency and provide endless cooking possibilities with consistent results. The combi oven can be loaded with unique and individual cooking recipes that make it even easier for operators to use the oven. Additionally, one or more combi ovens can be programmed to cook a menu item with consistent results any time and every time regardless of operation location or operator. Elkhart is considering the future addition of the Bluetooth®-enabled combi oven barcode scanners and software kits that make Hobart’s Combi Oven even easier to use.

Hobart’s WS-C208 Water Softener uses proprietary advanced techniques to remove hardness and protect boilers and commercial kitchen appliances. The twin-tank, non-electric softeners are not only developed for applications where space is critical but also are designed to eliminate hardness scaling, diminishing the need for costly deliming and maintenance, and can handle temperatures up to 160 degrees Fahrenheit.

Actions Taken:

- Upon review of the responses to the oven bid and the related equipment specifications, Elkhart chose the Hobart Combi Oven for the first phase of the multi-year, multi-site kitchen upgrade program.
- The district installed a total of 10 electric combi ovens with six units in the three middle schools and four units at one of the high school locations.
- Elkhart plans to purchase and install additional combi ovens at the two high school locations in the 2010 school year.
- The district uses the combi ovens to prepare a variety of foods including cheese sticks, chicken patties, chicken nuggets, popcorn fish, french fries, breadsticks and even rice.
- The district also added the Hobart WS-C208 Water Softener for their Hobart Combi Ovens to allow for easier cleaning since the softener helps reduce scale buildup.





“One of the biggest benefits the combi oven provides is the time savings. This oven heats up quicker, cooks faster, and cleaning it is as easy as pressing a button. This means we aren’t waiting for food to cook or spending time cleaning or dumping grease out of the fryers. The combi frees us up to tend to other tasks and makes us more productive.”

> Marlene Worthington, Westside Middle School cook

Results:

- **Produced energy saving:** On average, the schools that have switched to the Hobart Combi Ovens are saving 5 percent to 10 percent in energy costs due to the efficient design and accuracy of the combi ovens over the old convection ovens and fryers. In addition, the Hobart WS-C208 Water Softener uses no electricity and reduces water consumption by 20 percent to 50 percent.
- **Serve more nutritious food:** By eliminating fryers and preparing traditionally fried foods in the combi oven, the district is able to serve healthier alternatives of students’ favorite foods, such as chicken nuggets and cheese sticks.
- **Improve food quality and reduce waste:** The district can prepare consistent, high-quality products that are no longer burned, overcooked or dried out. Burned food is no longer thrown away, thus eliminating waste.
- **Easier to use:** The combi oven’s programmable feature enables administrators to program recipes directly into the oven, so anyone can cook consistent, high-quality food regardless of his or her level of cooking expertise.
- **Reduce cleaning time by 45 minutes per day:** The Hobart Combi has a self-cleaning cycle, reducing the amount of time spent cleaning the equipment. When used in conjunction with the Hobart WS-C208 Water Softener, the self-cleaning feature saves kitchen staff 45 minutes per day in cleaning time.
- **Reduce hardness:** By installing the Hobart WS-C208 Water Softener, Elkhart has reduced the water hardness from 18 grains per gallon to less than 3 grain per gallon in the combi.
- **Increase flexibility:** The ability to easily switch between steam, convection and combi modes in the new Hobart units enables the schools to cook a variety of food in a single oven, decreasing the amount of equipment required and lowering the capital costs.
- **Save time:** The combi cooks evenly and won’t overcook food, saving a significant amount of time rebaking or starting over from scratch. Since the combi preheats and cooks quicker than a convection oven, the amount of time required to prepare meals is reduced, which lets kitchen staff be more productive.
- **Increase efficiency:** The combi can cook a large amount of food quickly, decreasing the amount of time staff spends attending to food. They no longer have to manually rotate pans, as the oven automatically circulates heat around the food. The water softener eliminates lime buildup and hard water, so kitchen personnel spend less time manually cleaning the ovens.





Hobart is the world's premier commercial food equipment and service provider for the foodservice and grocery industries. Hobart manufactures

products for refrigeration; warewashing and waste handling; food preparation; baking; cooking; and weighing, wrapping and labeling systems. To learn more about Hobart, visit www.hobartcorp.com.



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