

Process this



You don't have to look

very hard to find chefs who are wedded to their food processors. Kitchen professionals routinely rely on their cherished brands to slice, chop, and emulsify, processing many of the key ingredients that make their dishes unique and their menus shine. Chef David Smith, who presides over the kitchen at The Old Tavern in Grafton, Vermont, has become so attached to his Waring FP40 4-quart processor that he has given it a name. "It can go from morning until night. It's

a workhorse," says Smith. "We call it Little Bertha."

Food-processor devotion like this is not uncommon. There are two Robot Coupe R2Ns in the large Ka'anapali Beach Hotel kitchen on Maui. "I'd be lost without it, so I keep a backup," says Executive Chef Tom Muromoto, adding that there are plenty of applications throughout his busy operation. The hotel's Sunday brunch, for example, regularly draws hundreds of guests. "The processor and the attachments are heavy duty, stand up to a lot of use, and are very easy to clean." He especially likes the R2N (\$1,068) for chopping garlic and fresh herbs and uses it daily to create flavored oils, blended sauces, and vinaigrettes. "The R2N is our bread and butter," says Robot Coupe sales representative John Maddox from the company's US headquarters in Jackson, Mississippi, where it was established in 1964 (Robot Coupe was founded in France in 1957). "That's the model that drives our sales."

Executive Chef John Ledbetter of San Francisco's sleek LarkCreekSteak is just as passionate about the company's slightly more expensive model, the R2Ultra (\$1,328), which comes with a stainless-steel bowl. He says that if there hadn't been a Robot Coupe in the kitchen when he arrived a year ago, he would have "run out and purchased one immediately." At the award-winning steak house, Ledbetter and his crew use their processor to make mayonnaise and Caesar salad dressing, and with an attachment

they shred potatoes for the signature Crisp Potato Pancakes with Fuji Apple Compote and Crème Fraîche and make horseradish for the housemade sauce. "It may be more expensive than other brands, but it's worth it. It gets used all day."

On the other end of the cost spectrum is Hamilton Beach, a company with a respectable following of professionals of its own. Anyone over the age of 40 remembers thick malts being poured from icy-cold, stainless-steel Hamilton Beach blender containers—the company's first drink mixers were installed in soda fountains in 1911. True to its history, the company's commercial-grade processing appliances are still, officially, blenders, but many chefs use them in the same ways as they use processors. The company promotes its registered Wave-Action system, which pulls contents down into the blades—rather than spinning them around the container walls—for particularly smooth mixtures.

That's why Gabriel Caliendo is a devotee. The corporate chef and partner in Southern California's casual, three-unit-and-growing, high-volume Lazy Dog Café keeps several HBB250 bar blenders (\$194) in each location. "We use them to produce pureed cold sauces—our Chimichirri Sauce and Walnut Pesto Sauce are two examples. I've found they work well at emulsifying without bruising fresh herbs." And the reason for choosing the bar model over the kitchen model? "The narrower the blender, the easier it is to make emulsifications."

Waring, which boasts a long history of its own, introduced its first blender at the National Restaurant Show in Chicago in 1936. Its commercial division was created in 1985, and according to Director of Marketing Communications Mary Rodgers, the processors are designed "with the power, precision, and speed to keep up with the fast-paced demands of foodservice professionals." Old Tavern's Smith uses his Waring FP40 (approximately \$1,680) to process much of the produce and herbs that come from the restaurant's large on-site kitchen garden. "I use it for everything. We make gazpacho and sauces with it; we slice potatoes, chop garlic and shallots. We use it to make our flavored butters, and it can shred 50 pounds of cheese at a time. It does just about everything. We find it very user-friendly."

Regardless of what culinary wonders a chef chooses to cook, chances are good that the right food processor is available. Differences in size, performance, materials, special features, and price ensure that every chef will find the perfect tool for good hard kitchen work and—possibly—deep-seated infatuation.

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