

# NATURAL GAS RACK OVENS



Natural gas rack ovens are a mainstay of many high-volume institutional operations. These compact, stainless steel “boxes” are workhorses, producing large quantities of consistent product while using little energy. This versatile equipment can cook mass quantities of identical items or several types of foods simultaneously and provides:

- Energy savings
- Quick recovery
- Consistent results

## Quick cooking, easy operation

Rack ovens can capably handle everything from baked products to meats and poultry to cook/chill items, bulk vegetables and casseroles. They are easy-to-use and also a great option for slow cooking and re-thermalizing.

Product is simply placed onto full-sized sheet pans that are loaded onto mobile racks. The loaded racks are then rolled into the oven’s large vertical door and either hook into a rotating device at the top or the floor rotates. Once the door is closed, the system activates automatically. Product is cooked while the racks slowly rotate in a carousel motion. Some manufacturers use a rotation that alternates clockwise and counter clockwise for uniform baking.

There is usually a fluorescent light bulb for interior lighting and large glass doors for easy viewing. Rack ovens are typically installed in a separate area of the kitchen, usually in a prep area or bake area away from the main cooking line-up, to permit a better kitchen workflow.

## Even heat, consistent results

Through a variety of heat exchangers and blowers, high-volume, low-velocity airflow produces even heat transfer throughout the oven cavity. This method is quick, keeps food moist and produces a consistent product. Some manufacturers use two fans and some use baffles to improve air flow. Any heat lost when the door is opened is quickly recovered, saving energy and time.

Cooks preparing artisan breads, French baguettes, bagels and pizzas will appreciate the oven’s self-contained



*Natural gas rack ovens are a mainstay for schools, bakeries and hospitals.*

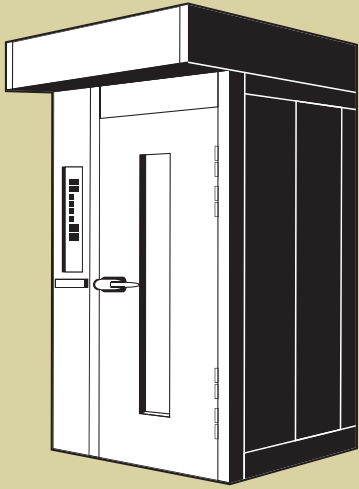
steam system. Steam can be injected, in measured amounts as needed, for proper crust formation, even melting of cheese and to help retain moisture while roasting meats and poultry.

## Sizes and styles

Rack ovens come in single rack, double rack or half-size racks. A full-size oven allows one full-size rack, which generally holds 12 to 18 full-size (18" x 26" x 1") sheet pans, while a double rack model typically holds two full-size racks, side-by-side.

A half-size rack oven holds six to 10 full-size sheet pans, with space underneath for a proof box or pan storage. These are ideal for smaller operations that do a lot of baking. The major difference, other than size of these smaller units, is that they have a fixed, non-removable rack.

All rack ovens come with manual or programmable controls and a front access panel for easy servicing. They also usually have a self-contained ventilation hood, although they can be placed under a regular hood if it is located high enough.



**Rack oven**

## Tips for best results

- For even baking, be sure to level oven when installing. Also load product evenly on each pan and leave uncovered.
- Warped and rough-textured pans provide less-even results. For uniform baking and browning, use flat pans that are the same height and thickness. Most products do best in standard sheet pans (18" x 26" x 1"), which allow air to evenly reach product.
- Light, shiny pans reflect heat and produce better baking results. Dark pans absorb heat, resulting in uneven browning and baking.
- Different products can be loaded simultaneously as long as they can cook at the same temperature and time.
- When using steam injection, be sure all loaded products will benefit from it.
- Some items will yield better results by placing in a proofer before baking.
- If product is browning too quickly, especially around the outside edge of the pan, but center of the pan isn't cooking as fast, the temperature is too high. Modify cooking time and temperature according to food product.
- Roast meats from 250 F to 300 F. Use a meat thermometer or oven probe for accuracy.
- Defrost frozen products by lowering the temperature by 100 F for approximately 15 minutes, then return to the proper temperature to complete cooking.

## Tips for efficient use

- Cook full loads whenever possible for greatest efficiency.
- Preheat to the suggested temperature for the amount of time recommended by the manufacturer, and turn off when not in use.

## Care of a rack oven

To maintain operating efficiency and extend the life of your oven:

- Follow the manufacturer's recommendation for cleaning and maintenance.
- Avoid spills, but when they occur, remove promptly.
- Remove crumbs and debris from door openings to avoid cracks and broken hinges.

## Rebates lower start-up costs

CenterPoint Energy rebates make the purchase of efficient, natural gas equipment even more affordable. Call us at the phone number listed below for details.

## For more information

To receive additional information or to schedule free training on rack ovens and other natural gas equipment, call **612-321-5470 (1-800-234-5800, ext. 5470)**. For your convenience, training sessions can be held in our Foodservice Learning Center or your facility.

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