

# MASTERS OF THE KITCHEN UNIVERSE

Baron has come a long way since its foundation in 1995. Following a sweeping rebranding, it aspires to be the most durable and reliable everyday choice for commercial kitchens, executive director **Marco D'Ambrogio** tells Andrea Tolu



Above: Marco D'Ambrogio

Left: Baron's revamped Queen kitchen range 700 series has a new look

**B**y the time Marco D'Ambrogio joined Baron as executive brand director at the end of 2014, the then 21-year-old company had earned its spot as a traditional name in the market of commercial kitchens. Perhaps too traditional, though. "The brand I found at the time was seen as static, without anything new in its appeal and approach," says D'Ambrogio.

After three and a half years of rebranding work, Baron improved its marketing strategy, internal structure and sales network. And of course, products as well. A significant amount of work

was done on existing models and new ones, working on all possible aspects: technology, materials and design.

One example is the new Queen kitchen range from Baron. The revamped 900 and 700 series feature a new look, an extensive use of AISI 304 stainless steel and a bar that runs their entire length, offering physical support to chefs during their 12-hour shifts.

The 900 series also has a new model, called Talent. It's an all-in-one piece of equipment that works as fry-top, kettle, steamer, bain-marie, bratt-pan, pasta cooker and slow cooker.

**"Our ambition is to satisfy everyone in the foodservice business: from hospitals to fine-dining restaurants and fast-food chains"**

"Talent is the evolution of cooking," says D'Ambrogio. "We've just started to explore the potential of this approach and we want to make it evolve gradually. For us, it's important to be respectful of Baron's history and customers' requests."

#### SKILLED AND SPECIALIZED

"Respecting Baron's history" is not just about keeping its traditional flair. Part of the brand's identity is also being a generalist. Generalists and specialists are the two sides of the food preparation market, explains D'Ambrogio. The first design and build the whole kitchen, while

the latter focus on single elements: ovens, cookers, blast chillers.

Although D'Ambrogio has a specialist background – prior to Baron, he worked for many years in the oven market as a sales director – he didn't try to impose that model. Rather, he brought with him the typical obsession of specialists for technical expertise and customer service. The result of that merger is new pre- and after-sale services that complete the picture of his rebranding work: end-to-end project and design, customer training, cooking demonstrations, and an online shop for spare parts.

Baron can still call itself a generalist company but with skilled and specialized professionals behind everything they do. "Our ambition is to satisfy everyone in the foodservice business: from hospitals to fine-dining restaurants and fast-food chains," says D'Ambrogio.

It's an ambition Baron can afford to have. Its catalog has 4,000 products with a whole range of professional equipment: kitchens, ovens, refrigerators, blast chillers, counter-tops, display cabinets and dishwashers. With bespoke solutions available, there's no type of customer Baron couldn't work with.

# SOLID, RELIABLE, FLEXIBLE

Three success stories best illustrate Baron's ability to be at ease in very different scenarios



## PERPETUAL ROME

Perpetual Rome, is a gourmet restaurant and cooking school in Rome, Italy, that is in fact a research and development (R&D) lab. Baron's solution worked on three levels: aesthetics, layout and equipment. The restaurant has a 30-seat dining room and

a 350-m<sup>2</sup> kitchen designed to accommodate a growing team of chefs.

"Baron built for us a kitchen wherein to experiment with every possible technique and develop our menu to its full potential," says Perpetual Rome's chef, Cezar Pradescu.

"The open layout represents our idea of hospitality: opening our doors to guests, to offer the best food we have," he says. "It's a pleasure to work in here, and the quality of the equipment gives me great peace of mind."



The quality of Baron's equipment has given the team at Perpetual Rome great peace of mind.





## LE CEDRARE

Le Cedrare is a family restaurant and banqueting room located in a XVII-century villa near Verona, Italy. Le Cedrare's cuisine is the sum of local ingredients, variety and creativity: "Our menu goes from sushi to risotto with tastasal," (a classic local cuisine), says owner and

multi-award-winning executive chef Count Marcantonio Sagramoso. "But always with familiar tastes."

"Stepping into my kitchen in the morning is always a joy," he says, "because I never know what's going to happen. Cooking is a bit like painting. The basics don't change, but

the result is always different."

A customer of Baron's for 20 years, Sagramoso always appreciated its reliability and the wide choice of solutions in the catalog. "Like with an orchestra," he says, "the more instruments you have in the kitchen, the easier it is to create."



## THE PROFESSIONAL NURSERY KITCHEN

The Professional Nursery Kitchen, a London, UK-based central production unit (CPU) that prepares and delivers meals to nurseries. Here, variety and creativity give way to the high level of hygiene necessary when cooking for pre-school children.

"What I appreciate the most in our kitchen is consistency. It gives us the same results time after time no matter what we do," says the company's managing director, Jonathan Player.

"It's a hard factory environment we've got here, and the kitchen stands up to that. You just don't have problems with it. The ovens, they work, and they're self-cleaning. That's what's so important to us."

After this intense and careful rebranding work, a new phase can start for Baron: "The quality is there," says D'Ambrogio. "What we need to do now is make the brand even more prestigious."

Like before, D'Ambrogio is going to rely mainly on resources from inside the company: "In our market, people with the right expertise are hard to find. It makes more sense to use our own resources and give them the opportunity to improve their skills."

"Besides, people always surprise you: when put in certain situations they give the best of themselves. I think that's what any manager is supposed to do: get the best from their collaborators," says D'Ambrogio.

## THE DEALER'S VIEW:



Roger Flanagan, managing director of Universal Foodservice Equipment Ltd discusses how his company worked with Baron on The Professional Nursery Kitchen project

**What was Universal Foodservice Equipment's role?**  
We supplied and demonstrated all of the Baron Equipment in the Kitchen, following the designs of our distributor and consultant, PHCC Ltd.

**How did your involvement in this project come about?**  
The installation went into the kitchen in Spring 2017, but we were involved one year earlier. PHCC's managing director Steve Hammond is an old friend of mine. He had picked up the project from Jonathan Player and called me in to bid for the project. I went to the Baron Showroom in Italy with Steve, Jonathan and his father. They were knocked out by the equipment there and said 'let's do it'.

**What were the key challenges you and the team faced?**  
From the start there were power and water supply problems that constantly caused the design and equipment to change, almost on a weekly basis. Jonathan and Steve had to work out the power management, developing a fantastic system in the process. Between PHCC and us the design constantly evolved to solve these issues. Good communication was key. They were ideal customers for us.

**What innovation impressed you on this project?**  
There is a huge cold room, divided into sections with a kitchen in the middle. But the real innovation here was the auto-switchable power supply system that carries power to areas of need in the kitchen as required.

**Describe your company's relationship with Baron.**  
Universal has been working with Baron for 19 years and it was me who first brought the brand to the UK. I wanted to work with a company where I could import their equipment. I had known the Baron family through various international shows and I had always liked their equipment. It was really stylish. We are the only company to import Baron into the UK and we have done some really fine jobs here in the UK with them.

**Why are they such a good partner?**  
Over the years we have got to know and trust each other. Baron has a really good project design and development department that helps us with drawings, technical information and everything else needed. We are delighted to be one of the 'Baron family'.