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One million steam ovens – Bünde writes product history
Miele plant produces built-in appliances for wholesome cooking

Bünde, Germany, September 2016 – Miele's Bünde plant recently put the finishing touches to its one-millionth steam oven. This number illustrates a success story as only 20 years ago domestic steam ovens were rarities in the kitchen. It was Miele which ensured this product its breakthrough and is still the company which today offers the broadest range of steam ovens and combination products. These products are manufactured in Bünde using the latest communication technology.

“Bünde is the birthplace of steam cooking as it is known today,” says plant manager Dr. Uwe Brunkhorst during a photoshoot with employees on the steam oven assembly lines. “One million units is quite a milestone, but we intend to reach the 2 million mark far faster,” says the plant manager. This optimism is not without cause as in 2016 alone Miele is set to build almost 90,000 steam ovens and combination units using steam. 20 years ago, there was no indication that sales would rise to such heights, with annual unit sales languishing in the four-digit range.

The first domestic steam oven was first introduced in 1983

The question as to who invented this product is clear and unequivocal: The first steam oven for household use was launched in 1983 by the Imperial brand, based in Bünde. This model was essentially a pressure cooker requiring considerable installation effort – one of the reasons why a breakthrough was a while in the making. This only changed when Miele took over its former supplier. Within a matter of only a few years, the first pressureless steam oven was developed in Bünde and launched as the DG 163 in 1998. The Miele product was equipped with a water tank and, as a plug-and-play unit, was incredibly simple to install in an existing kitchen.

Similarly, there was no need for any rethinking in terms of cooking habits, either, as cooking times on this pressureless cooker were roughly similar to conventional cooking on a cooktop.

Further impetus came from a scientific study, conducted by the Justus Liebig University in Giessen and by the University of Koblenz-Landau. These investigations confirmed that cooking in a Miele steam oven is far superior to traditional pan-based cooking: Fewer vitamins are lost and the taste and sensory properties of food, such as its appearance, are more appealing after a 'steam bath'. This was also reflected in extensive coverage of this new cooking method by the media.

From 2001 onwards, Miele set about establishing its Bünde plant as a competence center for steam ovens, cooktops and warmer drawers by concentrating the development and production of these products there. Over the years that followed, Miele 'steamed' ahead with a freestanding unit (2003), the first combination steam oven (2006) and, in 2009, with an entirely new production facility for steam ovens.

The fourth industrial revolution – Modern communication technology in production

Steam ovens are produced at the plant using the latest production methods. 'Industry 4.0', otherwise referred to as the fourth industrial revolution, is more than familiar to employees: Each machine is assembled in its entirety by one single worker. In the process, support and assistance is provided by a tablet computer which illustrates assembly steps at each workstation. Despite a growing number of model versions, the fault rate in assembly has dropped, and employees are able to familiarize themselves with their new tasks faster. Modern means of communication in the form of apps on tablets are also available to foremen for use in the deployment of line workers and also simplify trouble-shooting and remedying faults in the repair bay.

Miele Bünde employs a staff of around 600, including 35 apprentices. Approximately 400,000 kitchen appliances a year are produced in a production area covering around 40,000 m².

About Miele

Founded in Germany in 1899 with a single promise of Immer Besser, a phrase meaning Forever Better, Miele has dynamically grown to become the world's largest family-owned and operated appliance company with more than 16,600 employees, 12 production facilities and representation in nearly 100 countries. As a premium appliance brand represented on all continents, Miele is steadfastly committed to the highest quality, performance and environmental standards. Miele's range of exceptional consumer appliances includes: vacuum

cleaners; laundry systems; rotary irons; dishwashers; ranges; built-in convection, speed, steam and combi-steam ovens; cooktops; ventilation hoods; refrigeration; wine storage and espresso/coffee systems.

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