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## bringing commercial kitchens into the NEW DECADE

We have just entered a new decade and 2020 continues to show technology changing the way commercial kitchens operate and improve food quality as well as outcomes in restaurants. With each passing day, impressive technology is being developed, improved on and perfected to automate daily kitchen processes. In fact, with the emergence of the Internet of Things (IoT), a medium that connects anyone and anything to the World Wide Web, inanimate objects like fridges, ovens, griddles and grillers can now communicate and share high levels of digital intelligence data between the user and other inanimate objects, without any human intervention. Akin to having “a mind of their own” in form, these inanimate object or machines are able to relieve restaurant staff off some tiring, mundane kitchen work that are often repetitive, labour-intensive and overwhelming.



➤ BRINGING COMMERCIAL  
KITCHENS INTO THE NEW DECADE

➤➤ THE CONNECTED KITCHEN

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In a business environment that is more competitive than ever before, restaurants are under increasing pressure to deliver much more than just a great meal. Foodservice businesses have to find ways to trim costs without sacrificing the quality of the food or the customer experience. For this reason, many restaurant operators have embraced technology, automation and even robotics to some extent, to gain a firm handle on daily kitchen operations, inventory, resource and energy management, speed and accuracy of service, quality and safety of food, wastage prevention and, equipment maintenance.

## INSIGHTS FOR THE FUTURE

With various technological advancements available in the new decade, it may be helpful to know where restaurant operators should be investing in, in order to bring their commercial kitchen into the future. Let's take a look at some insights from a new 10-year outlook report titled "Restaurant Industry 2030: Actionable Insights for the Future," prepared by the National Restaurant Association's together with American Express and Nestlé Professional. The report examines the key indicators shaping the future of the foodservice industry, identifies the most and least likely developments in the upcoming decades, and considers possible disruptors outside the industry that could transform it. For the foodservice equipment sector, the report further forecasts that sustainability will become increasingly importance, the workforce will grow grayer, kitchen equipment will grow smarter, and delivery will continue to be a major factor from this decade onwards.



## The reports projects that by 2030:

- Back-of-house operations will become more fully automated as costs fall and flexible, reprogrammable robot systems grow more sophisticated.
- The restaurant of the future will be smaller with more automated kitchen equipment and the typical kitchen layout may change.
- Artificial intelligence with knowledge of cooking techniques, food chemistry, recipes, and alcohol could produce unexpected new culinary and beverage experiences.
- Through technological advancements, more restaurants will be designed to reduce use of energy and water and minimize waste.

By deconstructing the possible trends and innovations of the upcoming decades, both large and small-restaurant operators will be able to anticipate their greatest challenges in this already highly competitive foodservice industry.

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## **TECHNOLOGY & AUTOMATION: FUTURE-PROOF KITCHEN FEATURES**

Technology together with automation can make processes more efficient as well as decrease kitchen costs. Although some of this technology comes with a hefty price tag, new developments and improvements to old ones are making kitchen systems more accessible and affordable. This is why we can expect that more restaurants will continue to jump on the automation train as the foodservice industry continues to mature and specialise. To keep your commercial kitchen ahead of the curve, here are 5 future-proof kitchen automation features to invest in:

### **Integrated Kitchen**

First and foremost, you will need a back-of-house solution that can integrate with all the devices in your restaurant. Its difficult to create a well-connected restaurant with technology that does not communicate with one another. The good news is, with the Internet of Things, you can find kitchen automation which includes software that connects both the front- and back-of-house, as well as offers a multitude of integration options. Having kitchen automation software with integration partners can protect your investment should you ever need to swap the software in your restaurant.

### **Kitchen Data**

As a restaurant operator, you will no doubt want to create a smarter, more efficient, and profitable restaurant. This is where kitchen data becomes highly essential. A number of Kitchen Display Systems (KDS) are now starting to gather data from every stage of the guest's dining journey, creating a more personalized experience from the first contact until they leave your restaurant. With this data in hand, restaurant operators can use it to create marketing campaigns and identify bottlenecks. Real-time data gives operators and owners a complete scope of kitchen activity so that they can make critical business decisions immediately.

### **Capacity Management**

With an increased demand for off-premise dining and delivery options, this feature is imperative for blending the dual streams of traffic (in-store and off-premise). A KDS with a quoting manager will pace the orders based on real-time activity in the restaurant instead of just volume of order. In turn, the off-premise diner is provided an accurate quote time, and your kitchen isn't stressed. When traffic picks up in the kitchen, quoting to delivery partners and customers take all restaurant traffic into account. This way, guests receive their order at the expected time.



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## Automated SMS Texting

If your restaurant has a Kitchen Display System with a good quoting software, you may be able to send out automated SMS texts to off-premise diners, to alert them of the exact stage of their order. For example, the Domino's Tracker keeps customers up to date on their order's status from when the order is prepared to when it is on its way. Some KDS software also offers SMS capability to send texts from the kitchen to the servers and bussers.

## Mobile Capability

A number of kitchen automation systems offer a business intelligence app for restaurant owners. Through the app, operators can set alerts for when a particular metric falls below standards. For example, if an order sits in the delivery window for more than three minutes, the operator will be notified via the app. Users can also gain a quick glimpse of restaurant activity such as cook times to seating economy.

## AUTOMATED KITCHEN APPLIANCES

Apart from automated kitchen features, there are a number of automated kitchen appliances that can bring your kitchen into the new decade. Listed below are some examples of this.

### Frying Made Easy

Traditionally a hot, greasy, repetitive, and generally dangerous job, frying has now become a lot easier, efficient, energy- and cost-saving as well as safer! Automated controls and cooking processes cut labor and eliminate safety issues while boosting the quality and consistency of fried foods.

Introduction of fryers with built-in oil filtration throughout the day has meant improved oil quality and food taste as well as extended oil life. Some new fryers use 40% less oil than older models, with automatic top off and filtering. Taking automation even further are fryers with an integrated oil quality measuring system that eliminates subjective manual testing. Welbilt Frymaster's oil conserving range of fryers not only uses 40% less oil, but is also equipped with the full-featured SMART4U® OCF30 3000 Controller that can monitor and report on oil level, oil life, cook counts, and fryer performance.

### Heating Food Up: Commercial Griddles

The double-sided grill has come a long way since McDonald's first used it in the '60s. Welbilt's new Garland Xpress grill, for example, can cook items up to 2 inches thick between its grill plates and has icon-based touchscreen controls so that operators can preset the cooking temperature and time for each menu item. The platens lower and lift automatically when food is done. The grill's rapid recovery and rapid pre-heat features also saves approximately 24% energy by allowing the griddle to cool between peak periods.

### The Rise Of Smart Combi Ovens

Combi ovens are another big labour-and time-saver with its three-in-one cooking function using convected heat, steam, or a combination of both. Combi ovens make it possible for chefs to perform an impressive array of functions within a single piece of equipment. Not only does it cook food quickly, a combi oven also takes all monitoring and checking work off the kitchen staff's hands. It adjusts temperature, moisture and cooking time settings on its own, monitors the food's browning and degree of doneness, as well as save chefs the trouble of repeatedly turning pan-fried dishes.



A great example is Rational's SelfCookingCenter®, the world's first truly intelligent oven. Rational's smart combi oven line now offers a compact-size XS model available in addition to larger sizes in electric and gas-powered versions, all the way up to a roll-in model. All have an integrated fresh-steam generator; built-in cooking intelligence that recognizes the size and quantity of food items and calculates the best cooking method and time; and a labor-saving self-cleaning and descaling feature, which can be done unsupervised overnight.

Many combi oven makers include automatic cleaning cycles as an option on their units. Also automated with a self-cleaning feature is a new Alto-Shaam rotisserie oven. The patent-pending water jet design can handle heavy grease collection while minimizing water use. During cooking, the unit automatically pumps grease into a collection container for safe handling and disposal.

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## HVAC Usage And Temperature Tracking

Energy costs in the food services sector are three times higher per square foot in comparison with other industries. But heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems are a particularly hefty energy and financial drain. Therefore, it is important to install a system that can monitor HVAC energy usage, as well as provide real-time alerts when problems arise. Suitable for hoods and ventilated ceilings in restaurants, Halton's M.A.R.V.E.L. Intelligent Demand Controlled Ventilation system which monitors by zone or kitchen block reduces exhaust airflow rates by up to 64%. For example, in a hood ventilation system, M.A.R.V.E.L. can adjust the exhaust airflow hood by hood and in a fully independent way. If just one cooking range is operating, only the airflow for that hood concerned will be automatically adjusted. The other hoods will continue to operate at a low flow rate. It works the same way with the zones of a ventilated ceiling. The Halton's M.A.R.V.E.L. system also regulates the exhaust fan speed to keep power consumption at a bare minimum, resulting in massive savings on air conditioning and on the electrical consumption of the fans.

## Keeping It Cool

The refrigeration unit is one of the most important equipments in an F&B business because this is where all the vital stocks are kept. With automation and technology, a refrigerator can become a separate appliance - each shelf, drawer, and freezer section can be monitored and thermostatically controlled independently. "Incompatible" foods, such as cakes and pies, can be stored and cooled/frozen at different levels in the same appliance. The system can determine spoilage time, when food is supposed to be used by, if its chemical makeup changes (such as a marinade), and if pathogens are present. Some Smart refrigerators can even monitor inventory levels, which will then send alerts to the Chef or kitchen manager to order more stock when it runs low.

For more affordable options, restaurateurs can also install automated temperature-monitoring devices or wireless thermometers to ensure that the refrigerators are operating at optimum temperatures and the integrity of food items are kept intact. The Pine Garden Bakery and Empire State Restaurant in Singapore have both leveraged on these automated refrigeration monitoring devices.



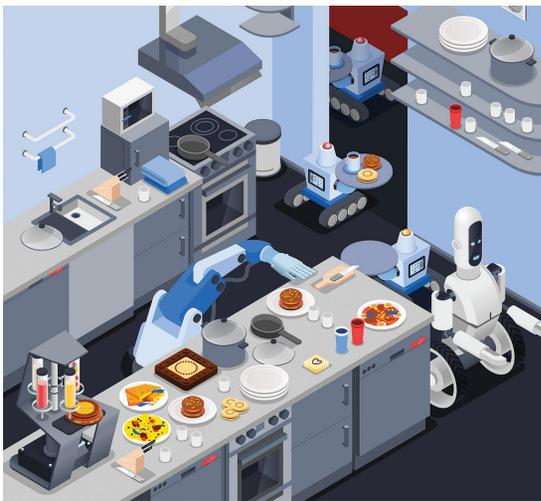
## Warewashing Power

Warewashing may be the most labour-intensive work for foodservice workers than any other area of a foodservice facility, therefore this work is an obvious candidate for automation. With Winterhalter's UC Series Undercounter Dishwasher, kitchen staff no longer have to manually wash any dishes, glasses, cups, bowls and utensils but simply pre-scrape off any food or beverage leftovers on the wares before loading them into the dishwasher and letting the dishwasher do the job. The UC Series from Winterhalter impresses with its intuitive controls, economical operation and excellent cost-effectiveness. Its mission is sparkling glasses, clean dishes, and impeccable cutlery.

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## ROBOTICS HAVE ARRIVED

Imagine being served by a robot or watching one prepare your meal in a restaurant? While to many, this may be a unique experience as robots are still unfamiliar rarities, it is a foregone conclusion that these machines are here to stay and will eventually become a huge part of the restaurant and foodservice industry. A few examples of robots that are already working in the restaurant kitchen are:



- Three robots are employed by the American delivery service Zume Pizza to prepare pizza bases (spread sauces on and put them into the oven).
- Robots Kona and Koya cook four different ramen dishes in a shopping mall in Shanghai.
- Spycy, a robotic-powered restaurant in Boston, Massachusetts cooks complex meals in under three minutes. A robotic chef with seven magnetically heated woks and finely tuned temperature and time sensors tosses and sears the ingredients and dumps them into compostable bowls.
- CaliBurger, a burger restaurant in California, USA, employs Flippy, a burger-flipping robot.



- At Henn-na, a restaurant outside Nagasaki, Japan, food is prepared by a line of humanoid robot chefs that shake cocktail drinks, fry donuts, shoot out perfectly portioned salads, and cook pancakes with spatula-like arms.
- Sally, a self-contained salad-making robot from Chowbotics that can assemble salads using up to 21 pre-chopped ingredients that are loaded into its hoppers daily.
- Haidilao, Beijing's first robot-aided hotpot restaurant employs robots that will take orders, prepare and deliver raw meat and fresh vegetables to customers to plop into soups prepared at their tables.
- Picnic, a Seattle-based technology company unveiled a Pizza-making robot in January 2020 that is capable of making up to 300 12-inch pizzas, all with customized toppings, per hour.
- Moley, a UK-based robotics company has created the world's first robotic kitchen. Featuring an advanced, fully functional robot integrated into a beautifully designed, professional kitchen, it cooks with the skill and flair of a master chef.
- Wilkinson Baking Company created a bread-making robot that does the work of a full bakery. Using a mix of dry ingredients, the machine blends, prepares and cooks the dough and serves customers with freshly-made bread on site.

As the industry continues to evolve, so will kitchen technology. By streamlining commercial kitchens with automation and robotics, many day-to-day pressures that kitchen staff experience can be eliminated. Kitchen automation is the vital piece of the puzzle that will help contribute to creating a smarter, more efficient restaurant that keeps guests happy and builds loyalty. Restaurant operators that invest in the right kitchen technologies will be rewarded with vitality and growth, not only in the next year, but well into the future. 🍳

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## the CONNECTED KITCHEN



In one of our earlier article, we talked a little bit about the Internet of Things (IoT) and the role it can play in a commercial kitchen. A result of marriage between technology and automation, the connected foodservice kitchen is no longer on the cusp of becoming a reality; this blue-sky vision of truly integrated connectivity has already been realised. The connected kitchen not only strives to improve food consistency and diminish human error and injuries, it also helps to slash food waste and energy consumption while enhancing food safety, reducing labour costs and maximising equipment performance as well as operating life. In the connected kitchen, data is easily shared among systems, equipment and mobile devices and this data can be accessed in real time in the cloud, analysed and acted upon remotely or automatically based on the information being exchanged to improve operations, guest satisfaction and profitability.

It is vital to have complete visibility and control over the daily kitchen operations as equipment like stoves, ovens, deep fryers, refrigerators, walk-in freezers and HVAC systems all require regular monitoring for breakage, temperature, and compliance. As a result, restaurant employees are often compelled to check on them multiple times during the day and record data on temperature and energy consumption. This does not only affect productivity, but also hampers product quality and creates unwanted expenses in the long run.

To put the power of information and application of digital technology to work so that commercial kitchen processes can be optimized, food quality and the guest experience can be improved, waste and equipment downtime can be reduced, menus and software can be done remotely, and increased revenue can be realized, Welbilt's KitchenConnect® digital service delivers 24/7 kitchen equipment integration with IoT technology and monitoring systems designed specifically for foodservice.



Actionable alerts to thousands of locations on 4 continents, 24 hours a day 7 days a week, put real time management at your fingertips. With information that is responsive, useful and simple to use, you can take operations from average to great and realize benefits like never before. Welbilt's KitchenConnect gives you the peace of mind that even when you can't be onsite, information from your restaurant can be available 24/7/365 wherever you are.

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With Kitchenconnect's dashboard, chefs, operators, restaurant managers, and multi-unit owners can unlock all the equipment information needed to optimise the operation of a commercial kitchen, including:

**Report Management** - Consumption data (Electric, Water, Consumables), Cycle rates, Utilization rates, Operational status, Time charts (peak/low), Demand analysis (food), Error logs/needed actions, Production statistics, Descriptive analytics.

**Asset Management** - ID (Model, Serial#), Location (Geo Data), Status (SW, Firmware), Service provider, Installation data, Documents, manuals and videos, Warranty period, Store ID.

**Menu Management** - Up/down load (Cloud or USB), Product image management, Recipe creation & modification, Recipe library viewing/sharing, Daypart assignment, Product position assignment.

**Quality Management** - HACCP data, Cook/harvest/draft data, Temp min/max data, Cycle times (completed/cancelled), Equipment hazards (Door Open, Platen, Position, Power Break), Cleaning cycles, Quality measurements, Hold times.

**Service Management** - Equipment diagnostics, Error resolution guidance, Service reports, Warranty service, PM programs and guidance, Asset tracking

**Scenario:** Restaurant BYN has 4 outlets in different locations that have been integrated with Welbilt's Kitchenconnect digital service. Through this integrated system, Restaurant BYN is able to monitor all of its restaurants' operations, assets

and equipment performance remotely via a mobile app. By having consumption data through the connected kitchen's Report Management, Restaurant BYN is able to understand how much electricity, water and energy is used in all 5 restaurants. With asset management information, Restaurant BYN will receive data on when the warranty periods of any equipment is about to expire and can then make a decision on whether to send these equipment for any servicing prior to the warranty expiry date. Through its Menu Management information feature, Kitchenconnect allows Restaurant BYN to create, modify and share any menu as well as programme it to be used in all of its restaurant outlets. Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) compliance is of great importance for restaurants and other foodservice providers. Receiving HACCP data through Kitchenconnect's Quality Management enables Restaurant BYN to address any food quality or hygiene concerns in all of its outlets and can decide on a course of action to address these issues immediately. Last but not least, Kitchenconnect's Service Management feature provides Restaurant BYN with equipment diagnostics such as equipment downtime, failure or servicing. With these dashboard features by Kitchenconnect, Restaurant BYN is able to stay ahead and in control of all its restaurants' operations remotely while keeping the focus on customer service at the same time.

KitchenConnect® follows an open approach, offering the connection flexibility restaurants and large chains need. It allows operators to connect equipment from companies other than Welbilt, additionally Welbilt equipment can be connected through other already existing or preferred platforms.



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## HOW COMMUNICATING KITCHEN SYSTEMS CUT COSTS

One of the biggest non-fixed cost in running a commercial kitchen is energy usage. According to surveys done by the US Department of Energy, restaurants use more energy per square foot than any other type of commercial building - more than three times the usage rate of the average commercial structure - as a result of the heavy demands of both cooking and refrigeration within a compact space.

Having a good communicating control system in place can easily lead to energy savings. Some of that is from optimising startup and shut-down of cooking equipment - something that kitchen staff tend to be too cautious about. With good data analytics, a connected kitchen can help stop ongoing energy leaks or wastage and maximise savings. For example, when a restaurant moves from breakfast service to lunch service, specific assets in the kitchen are no longer required. Data analytics and algorithms in a connected kitchen can detect any operating standard violations where assets are not fired up or down, and the operations center continuously works with the crew to ensure that such violations are eliminated or kept to a bare minimum.



### Better Equipment Management

Apart from utility costs savings, installing a computerised kitchen monitoring system can also provide better management of equipment, with less downtime, longer useful life and fewer, smoother service calls. For example, if the system can determine that the refrigeration unit is having problems with the compressor, then kitchen staff can schedule a service call during normal service hours.

### Hvac And Water Usage

HVAC usage in commercial kitchens is another huge drain on energy consumption, second only to food preparation. By installing a computerised management system of the kitchen's HVAC, which is another big aspect of the communicating restaurant, energy costs can be further reduced while making the environment more pleasant for both guests and staff.

Water is a main component in the F&B industry and even more so in a commercial kitchen. While water used to be a minor utility bill previously, with rising costs today, rates are increasing faster than ever before. To save on water costs, commercial kitchens can add hardware like drip sprayheads but also sophisticated computerised control systems that take into account site-specific conditions such as heat, humidity, sunshine, and even water runoff patterns based on the type of soil. A private internet connection will allow managers to monitor conditions at each restaurant and alert them quickly to any problems.



Communicating kitchen systems like Welbilt's Kitchenconnect is already in wide use among QSR's, fast casual restaurants, convenience stores as well as hotels and resorts. With rising labour and food costs as well as expensive leases and rentals, restaurant operators are looking for relief anywhere they can - this means more automation and data analytics to gain additional kitchen efficiency. With so much data stranded today that can be accessed to support the commercial kitchen, it is not hard to imagine that eventually, many commercial kitchens will adopt this kind of technology. Paving the way forward, Kitchenconnect by Welbilt aims to integrate all segments of foodservice so that information can be captured and stored, and everything from farm to fork can be monitored.

To learn more about KitchenConnect®, visit <https://www.welbilt.com/KitchenConnect/About>

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## Q&A SEGMENT

To gain a little more information on 'The Connected Kitchen and what the F&B industry may be able to expect from kitchens of the future, we interviewed Welbilt's Director for FITKitchen & Connectivity Solutions, Mr. John Zhang.

### **What does a connected commercial kitchen (with KitchenConnect) look like?**

The application of digital technology to kitchen operations makes it possible to put the power of information to work so that the food service industry can adapt to an ever-changing environment faster and more efficiently. Welbilt KitchenConnect digital platform offers numerous ways to harness this power to take operations from average to great, realising benefits like never before. KitchenConnect dashboard unlocks all the equipment information you need to optimize the operation of your kitchen.

### **Welbilt's KitchenConnect is currently connecting with QSRs, FCRs, convenience stores, hotels and resorts; will this connected kitchen system be able to service smaller foodservice businesses like casual restaurants, coffee shops and bakeries etc?**

KitchenConnect utilizes a host of functions to enable more efficient operation in commercial kitchens across all segmented concepts - this includes QSRs, FCRs, convenience stores, hotels, convention centres, fast casual, casual dining, coffee shops, grocery café, bakeries and commissary etc. It can be adapted effectively to food service businesses of all shapes and sizes across the industry. KitchenConnect provides equipment information for chefs, operators, managers, and multi-unit owners to optimize the operation of their kitchens and adapt to an ever-changing industry quickly and efficiently. The advantages are manifold and substantial.

### **How does KitchenConnect allow scalability for smaller foodservice operators and how can Welbilt help integrate the connected kitchen system into their operations?**

Welbilt has connectivity solutions tailored to different market segments and sizes. We offer different options and solutions for large companies and we also have 3<sup>rd</sup> party partnership model for middle tier customers. For smaller foodservice operators who may not have the necessary IT infrastructure and just want to access their equipment, KitchenConnect can help integrate their equipment and provide them the subscription of dashboard for all management reports.

### **IoT restaurant technologies like the connected kitchen and KitchenConnect may cost more than their traditional counterparts, so how will smaller foodservice businesses afford to implement this integrated system?**

IoT restaurant technology may cost slightly more, however it pays for itself with the money and value added. For example, real-time temperature monitoring satisfies HACCP requirement for food safety, reliably and without any manual effort. It allows our clients to safeguard products which may be worth over \$1,000 plus. KitchenConnect allows the interoperability between products to standardise, maintain, and assure food safety, compliance, and energy management. By making the move to KitchenConnect, we expect smaller food service business to become more profitable with more streamlined operations.

### **Is KitchenConnect limited to certain menus only? Can it come into the Asian foodservice market with its various types of menus? What is flexible about it?**

Welbilt's KitchenConnect applies digital technology to optimise kitchen operations. It collects data from equipment, analyses and processes the data; and provides real-time insights, allowing completely secure visibility of equipment operations within an entire kitchen. It facilitates man to machine and machine to machine interactions. The application of this technology is not limited by market or menus. We already work with many clients across different geographic regions, in different markets and with diverse menus. It has been proved that this technology is flexible and broadly applicable for the Asian foodservice industry.

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**Now that we have reached that magical point where multiple technologies has combined to give birth to 'The Connected Kitchen' like KitchenConnect, what more can commercial kitchens come to expect after this?**

Today in our current industry, most equipment available on the market are designed with individual digital solutions for their own unique platforms. The end users are very often faced with the challenge of bringing together multiple platforms with diverse interfaces in a commercial kitchen. Welbilt is working to bring all brands to one digital platform together - we envision a common controller for all equipment across multiple brands. A full range of Welbilt equipment will have common user interfaces. We are in process of rolling out the full implementation of born digital common controller with common user interface across all brands. A unified complete application will establish interconnectivity throughout the entire kitchen; and provide customers with a much improved experience than what is currently available in the industry.

**Going forward, where else are we heading to for kitchens of the future? Are we at the peak? In your opinion, what else can we expect after this?**

Today's kitchen is fast-paced, ever-changing and full of challenges: profitable growth, speed of service, reduction of costs, food safety and quality, to name a few. Foodservice operators need to integrate, automate and simplify. We at Welbilt are not only providing the data to our end users to optimize their operation, but also integrating technology in the design of kitchen and IoT connectivity to provide complete solutions of foodservice equipment. Welbilt's FITKitchen envisions a commercial kitchen of the future that is designed around the interaction of food, beverage, people and equipment - a kitchen with low labour costs, high productivity, high sales and revenue and fresh menus.

Mr John Zhang has an Engineering degree from the Shanghai Ocean University, China; a Masters in Food Process Engineering from the University of Reading, UK and a PhD in Chemical Engineering from the University of Birmingham, UK. With more than 20 years of experiences in the F&B trade having worked on numerous successful projects for big names in the industries, Mr. Zhang was instrumental in developing and managing many equipment projects as well as providing support to open new markets. 