

The Hoodless Horstman Inn

The Horstman Inn was expanding to accommodate all the masquerade parties, Thanksgiving meals and office holiday festivities that they'd been booking.

It was early autumn, so they were inclined to fall for a plan to change the colors in the dining room while adding much-needed additional seating.

Their cooking capacity presented a whole other set of challenges. Increasing it, they thought, required a Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde transformation to the premises. The last time that they attempted to modernize got them into hot water with the historic preservation folks.

Everyone along the Hudson valley knew Irving Washington, the creator of Ichabod's Crane Service, for his sleepy demeanor (and hollow promises). Legend had it that he was able to install those ugly exhausts on top of a roof so that you couldn't tell if it was a mushroom fan or a poisonous mushroom!

It was super-natural therefore, that when tradesmen were called in, Washington was the first to cross the river and survey the site.

The task at hand was no ride through the pumpkin fields.

The hood-less Horstman Inn had been operating with a kitchen that appeared to have been sleeping for one hundred years! But now, they really needed to cook, but how would they mitigate the vapors?

The inn-keepers, Katrina & Brom Bones were immediately spooked by the high cost of running ductwork through their ancient walls.

The specter of rigging fans to the roof of their historic building was menacing; mounting these on their beautiful inn was frightening. They decided that Ichabod's Crane service must be eliminated (from the project).

Commercial kitchen installations are among the most complex construction projects. Taking up huge swaths of space in a facility and using multiple connections to every utility in a building present only a portion of the challenges. Renovations, especially in older structures add several layers of additional considerations.

As Halloween and Thanksgiving approached, time was running out. They didn't stand a ghost of a chance to make their deadline.

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The Inn was the favorite haunt of those who tarried in town. It was just one such apple-bobber, the Foodiequipper, who introduced them to ventless cooking equipment. A wide array of options was currently available.

It was possible, they were told, to add capacity to existing professional cook-lines, and to repurpose non-ventilated spaces for food production and finishing – all while staying well-within their budget.

They were immediately bewitched by the ductless hoods, self-contained fryers, self-contained combi-oven/steamers, and rapid-cook ovens. Menu items could be added, quality upgrades would be assured, and throughput would soon outpace the fastest steed in their stable.

They resigned their original plan of installing conventional hoods to the graveyard of failed ideas.

The plug-n-play installation of the ventless kitchen went smoothly; these tried and true appliances had no skeletons in the closet.

The innkeepers gave thanks for the ventless equipment providers for saving the day (and holiday season). They compiled a list – and, I might add, checked it twice - of the best reasons to go ductless, and put it in their annual holiday letter.

Rather than not opening until Christmas, they decided to share their top five list with Total Food Service readers:

- Ventless pieces of equipment are not turkeys. The technology has been around for decades and it is readily available, tested, approved and viable.
- Don't fear costs. When considering versus the total spend on permitting, roofing, electric, HVAC, and other trades the price of going ductless is comparable or less than conventional ventilation.
- The year-end rush for deductions is assisted by de-ducting. Ventless installations are capital equipment purchases, not building improvements.
- Home for the holidays: all of these appliances and technologies are mobile, and can be moved, re-moved, and removed.
- Safe holidays (and every days)- the lack of open flames and the higher level of protection by the latest sensing technologies provide an added level of security.

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Brom and Katrina refused to be scared off by new technology. The phantom apparitions of conventional ventilation would no longer vex them. Instead of a frightening fall, they discovered that all operators can benefit from the newfound ease of adding cooking capacity.

The spirits smiled upon the Inn as the trick of upgrading their kitchen was a real treat to all involved.