

Cordless Propane Food Warmer Frees Serving Lines From Electricity

CHARLOTTE, NC — A privately owned catering company with 36 years in food service has created a 19-pound cordless portable food warmer that operates on standard one-pound propane gas cylinders.

A ceramic-tile element produces radiant heat that keeps food at safe-serve temperatures even in windy conditions, according to inventor Bob Freeman, who was first president and co-founder of the National Barbecue Association. The warmer, he said, is ideal indoors and out, and avoids electrical fees at exhibition halls.

“We’ve worked on this since our fried fish got cold a few years ago at an outdoor party when the weather turned chilly and windy,” Freeman said. Radiant heat will not dissipate, he said, even in wind, over the short distance that keeps food hot.

“Four years ago, we developed a model that worked great; we still use several at our events,” he said. “But it was too expensive for many caterers.”

To reduce cost, Freeman’s company, SMS Catering in Charlotte, worked with a mechanical engineer and an industrial production firm. SMS, the largest privately owned caterer in Charlotte, likes that the warmer is made in the U.S.A.

Freeman created SMS Industries, also in Charlotte, to handle sales. Distributors, manufacturers’ representatives, and individuals may call 704-535-2222 or e-mail info@smsindustries.com. Details are available at www.smsindustries.com.

On the new model, the Freeman Cordless Food Warmer 200, heat is adjusted using a control knob, and by positioning the heating element from 17 to 32 inches above the serving surface.

The warmer meets the National Sanitation Foundation’s NSF₄ standard for food safety, and is certified by Underwriters Laboratories.

Chef Bernhard Spogat of Sharin’ Foodservice Sales, headquartered near Charlotte, saw the warmer during development. “We do events outside, including golf courses,” he said. “And during food shows you have to find an electrician, then you’re gritting your teeth hoping the power won’t go off when 50 or 60 food brokers turn on warmers at the same time.”

Tom Muller, another food-service veteran, said, “People want warmers that are practical, easy, convenient and safe — a warmer that does the job it’s supposed to do and meets all the rules and regulations. Bob’s warmer does that, and it’s attractive.”