

Gastronorms

The gastronorm system originated in Switzerland and was adopted in the early 1970s by the British Standards Institution. Strictly speaking, a gastronorm measures the capacity of containers. These can be solid metal, such as in roasting trays, perforated metal for steaming, toughened glass, composite plastic materials or disposable materials such as aluminium foil. The abbreviation GN is widely used as shorthand for gastronorm.

The gastronorm system started as a method of maximising oven or fridge capacity by using containers that are compatible in size with the oven cavity, so that no corners are left unused. For those who make kitchen equipment and those who manufacture oven and fridge containers, it gives a uniform sizing structure to maximise capacity efficiency.

Yet the gastronorm system has now spread beyond its first concept and is used as a pan sizing system for bains-marie, refrigerated preparation tables, microwave ovens - in fact most items of kitchen equipment that involve the use of cooking or storage containers.

A full-size gastronorm container is referred to as a gastronorm 1/1 and measures 530mm long x 325mm wide. All other sizes are fractions or multiples of this size: so a 1/3 container is standard width (325mm) but just a third as long (176mm); a 2/1 is twice as big and measures 530mm long x 650mm wide.

The full range of sizes is 2/1, 1/1, 2/3, 1/2, 1/3, 1/4, 1/6 and 1/9. There is also a 2/4 (a "long half" measuring 530 x 162mm) and 2/8 (a "long quarter" at 325 x 132mm). The standard gastronorm depths are 10mm, 20mm, 40mm, 65mm, 100mm, 150mm and 200mm. The depth measurements should always be taken into consideration when considering oven capacity. A manufacturer might claim that an oven can take 10 1/1 gastronorms, but at what depth? For example, an oven rated to take six pans of 40mm depth holds less food than one rated to hold six pans of 65mm depth.

As well as the basic sizes derived from the 530mm x 325mm module, the gastronorm system stipulates sizes for cut-outs and grids into which container flanges fit on a servery or bain-marie.

