

Can I take your order? Food-making robots finding a seat at kitchen table

By Associated Press, adapted by Newsela staff on 05.15.18

Word Count **440**

Level **590L**



Customers wait as their automatically prepared food is dropped from a cooking pot into a bowl at Spycy, a restaurant which uses a robotic cooking process, Boston, Massachusetts, May 3, 2018. Photo by: Charles Krupa/AP Photo

Robots are doing plenty of things these days. In Boston, Massachusetts, robots are busy making lunch for people. They cook vegetables and grains. They pour them into a bowl.

The robots create grain bowls at a restaurant called Spycy. It opened Thursday, May 3.

Robots Cook Up Grain Bowls

The owners call the seven cooking pots a robotic kitchen. A robot is a machine programmed to do certain jobs on command.

Customers push a touch-screen to buy a \$7.50 meal. The pot heats the vegetables and grain. Then the pot tips to pour the meal into a bowl. Water jets up to wash the pot before the next order.

Is this a robot cook or just another new high-tech machine? People have different answers to that question. No matter what, more of these kinds of machines are headed for restaurants in coming years.

Battle For The Kitchen Pits Machines Vs. Humans

A group of experts on businesses and jobs studied food preparation jobs last year. The group said people who prepare food have a higher chance of losing their jobs than others. The reason is food prep workers spend a lot of time on predictable physical jobs. Machines could do some of these jobs better.

There is one thing keeping machines from taking these workers' jobs. The robots cost more. This means restaurants still make more money by using people. That could change. Robots might become cheaper to make.

Robots can make mistakes. They need to be fixed sometimes.

This Machine Didn't Cut It In Germany

For this reason, some restaurants powered by machines have not done well. In 2007, a German restaurant began delivering food using machines.

The owner was Michael Mack. He did not want long lines. He also did not want people to have to carry meals to the table. The food glided down curvy rails.

Mack's idea didn't work though. The machines jammed. People also complained that the prices were too high. His restaurant closed.

Both people and robots work at Spyce. The restaurant was started by four Massachusetts Institute of Technology graduates. They hired people to do the trickier prep work. People precook rice. They chop vegetables. They cut meat. They prepare sauces.

"It Is Kind Of A Show" Watching The Machines

The real draw, however, is the eye-catching machines. The machines have many motors. They have sensors and moving parts.

"It is kind of a show," said Brady Knight, a co-founder of Spyce. "We didn't want to hide anything because we think what we made is pretty cool."

Food-making machines are also prized for speed and cleanliness. "Our robot doesn't get sick," Knight said.

Quiz

- 1 Finish the sentence below.
- One MAIN idea of the article is that _____.
- (A) robots are doing a lot of new things these days
 - (B) food workers spend a lot of time on predictable jobs
 - (C) some restaurants are using robots to prepare food
 - (D) robots and machines are hard to fix when they break
- 2 HOW does the section "Robots Cook Up Grain Bowls" support the MAIN idea of the article?
- (A) It shows that machines and robots are the same.
 - (B) It explains how the robotic kitchen at Spyce works.
 - (C) It shows why machines are not taking workers' jobs.
 - (D) It explains that the food made by robots is delicious.
- 3 HOW would robots need to change for more restaurants to use them?
- (A) They would need to be cheaper to make and use.
 - (B) They would need to have sensors and moving parts.
 - (C) They would need to become faster and cleaner.
 - (D) They would need to do certain jobs on command.
- 4 WHY did Michael Mack's restaurant close?
- (A) People did not like the robots.
 - (B) People said it cost too much.
 - (C) People had to wait in long lines.
 - (D) People did not enjoy the food.