

Traditionally low-tech pizza business is getting a high-tech makeover

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A robot puts a pizza into an oven at Zume Pizza in Mountain View, California, August 29, 2016. The startup, which began delivery in April, is using intelligent machines to grab a slice of the multi-billion-dollar pizza delivery market. Photo: AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez

MOUNTAIN VIEW, Calif. — At Zume Pizza in Mountain View, California, robots make the pizza. The company uses smart machines to make the pies for delivery. It is one of many companies using robots to change the way restaurants work.

Zume is using robots to free up people to do jobs that use more skill. Alex Garden is one of the co-founders of the company.

Some people do not like that more robots are doing human jobs. Garden says, "We're going to eliminate boring, repetitive, dangerous jobs." He says they still need humans.

Most Of Pizza-Making Process Automated By Robots

In the kitchen, pizza dough goes down a moving belt to the robots. The robots add sauce and then slide the uncooked pies into a very hot oven. Soon Zume will add robots that make the dough too. They will also add cheese and toppings. More robots will take the pizzas out of the oven, slice them up and box them for delivery.

Julia Collins is Zume's other co-founder. She says machines do those tasks so that more money can be spent on better ingredients. Collins also says, "There will always be a model here at Zume where robots and humans work together to create delicious food."

Mountain View is in part of California that is home to many of the world's high-tech companies. In the restaurant business there and elsewhere, new companies are building robots to help bring labor costs down. The machines also make food faster and improve safety.

Another company nearby is building robots that make fancy hamburgers. Meanwhile, a company called BistroBot has a machine that makes sandwiches while customers watch.

Robots Can't Do Everything

Jay Reppert started BistroBot. He says the company uses machines to do some of the smaller jobs found in sandwich shops. He says it is faster and less expensive. He says "it's this really fun experience to share with people."

Ken Goldberg works with machines that take over jobs usually done by humans. He agrees that robots can make simple foods such as pizza, burgers and sandwiches. However, he says they will not take over restaurants anytime soon. Robots can't work with very small things, make decisions or solve problems.

Many jobs in food service are complicated. "It will be a very long time before we have robots doing them," he says. Goldberg insists human restaurant workers still have important skills.

Zume Workers Will Shift To New Jobs

About 50 people work for Zume Pizza. Its owners say they will not get rid of any of them. Instead, workers will be moved into new jobs as robots take over more kitchen work and new shops open.

Zume also has new ideas for pizza delivery. The company plans to send out trucks this fall with ovens in them. The pizzas will cook on the way to customers. Many orders can be delivered before the trucks have to return to the restaurant.

Zume is trying to shorten delivery times as well. It has software that knows when customers will order, and what kind of pizzas they will want.

Charity Suzuki regularly orders pizza from Zume and does not mind the robot workers. She says she cannot tell whether the pizza was made by a robot or a human.

Quiz

1 What is the MAIN goal of Zume Pizza?

- (A) to replace human workers with robots
- (B) to hire new workers to train their robots
- (C) to make robots do more complicated jobs
- (D) to use robots to make pizza faster and better

2 Which two of the following sentences explain central ideas of the article?

1. *Some food companies are beginning to use robots to make their food.*
2. *Zume pizza wants to make its pizzas while they are being delivered to the customers.*
3. *People will still be needed to do more difficult jobs in food service.*
4. *Watching robots make food can be a fun experience.*

- (A) 1 and 3
- (B) 2 and 4
- (C) 1 and 4
- (D) 2 and 3

3 Read the selection from the introduction [paragraphs 1-3].

Some people do not like that more robots are doing human jobs. Garden says, "We're going to eliminate boring, repetitive, dangerous jobs." He says they still need humans.

Which phrase from the text helps you understand the meaning of "eliminate"?

- (A) people do not like
- (B) robots are doing human jobs
- (C) repetitive, dangerous jobs
- (D) still need humans

4 Read the sentence from the article.

In the restaurant business there and elsewhere, new companies are building robots to help bring labor costs down.

Which sentence from the article explains what "labor costs" are?

- (A) She says machines do those tasks so that more money can be spent on better ingredients.
- (B) The machines also make food faster and improve safety.
- (C) He says it is faster and less expensive.
- (D) Instead, workers will be moved into new jobs as robots take over more kitchen work and new shops open.