**Who’s job is safe?**

**Automation threatens labor jobs the most, but few jobs of any type are safe from automation (and robots)**

*Even our fast food FAVS (McDonalds), is already using kiosks for ordering food which is automatically prepared and queued for you as you walk or drive from the front to the back of the restaurant. Full automation will not happen until the future, but it will happen.*

McDonalds has been experimenting with automated restaurants for several years now, and continues to increase services and debugging their experiment. One of the greatest obstacles is the human staff who get in the way of the automation/robots. Even augmented and enabled by Artificial Intelligence techniques, the clumsy human staff in the restaurants don't know when they need to step in, or step out, of the way of automation. It's not something they learned in high school, or at home.

**For now** the safest jobs are line cook and the fryers who cook our french fries, chicken nuggets and fried chicken breasts for sandwiches. Seems to me all you need are timers to insert and remove these items and not overcook them. But I've never worked at McDonalds :-( .

Once the system is debugged, experts believe the food will never be more consistent and better. It seems that human laborers are not always precise and fully attentive when they are at work. Cash register operations are very effective with credit card purchases. Taking real cash is functional when the human customer can put the paper money effectively in the money slots and pick up their coinage without dropping the change all over the place. This is a very common problem when seniors are involved.

There is so much to look forward to in the near future. I hope I live long enough to enjoy all these modern conveniences.

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[***https://bigthink.com/technology-innovation/mcdonalds-replacing-human-drivethru-ai***](https://bigthink.com/technology-innovation/mcdonalds-replacing-human-drivethru-ai)

**McDonald's is replacing human drive-thru attendants with AI**

This article was originally published on our sister site, Freethink.

As if drive-through ordering wasn't frustrating enough already, now we might have a Siri-like AI to contend with. McDonald's just rolled out a voice recognition system at 10 drive-thrus in Chicago, expanding from the solitary test store they launched a few years ago.

But when will it come to your neighborhood Golden Arches?

"There is a big leap between going from 10 restaurants in Chicago to 14,000 restaurants across the U.S. with an infinite number of promo permutations, menu permutations, dialect permutations, weather — I mean, on and on and on and on," admitted McDonald's CEO Chris Kempczinski, reports Nation's Restaurant News.

Are we ready for AI? For those of us still dragging our heels on technology, unwilling to enable Siri on our phones, this might sound like a premature leap forward. But it isn't. We've been engaging with artificial intelligence in numerous ways — from chatbots to farm equipment — sometimes without our knowledge.

One of the biggest challenges actually has been training the employees to take a step back and not help the AI when it struggles.

AI helps online shoppers get a personalized experience. AI is creating art and diagnosing medical conditions. AI is even keeping company with isolated people during the pandemic.

Whether the bots will leave human workers jobless, only time will tell. Many McDonald's restaurants already had self-serve kiosks, where customers can place their order on an iPad-like screen, and many orders are now placed online or with apps.

Robots and artificial intelligence are taking on other roles in restaurants, too.

Flippy the robot flips burgers at a California restaurant, grilling up to 150 burgers in an hour. And Spyce, a Boston restaurant, employs seven automated woks to cook food — and zero human chefs.

Some say this trend toward automation will improve food safety, since robots are easy to clean and never sick. Others hope robots will serve as the reliable backup staff in an industry with a high employee turnover rate, recently hit with post-pandemic labor shortages.

Is it working for McDonald's? Yes and no. The technology is still in its infancy and only about 85% accurate. One in 5 orders needs a little help from an actual human — though Kempczinski says that one of the biggest challenges actually has been training the employees to take a step back and not help the AI when it struggles. But the CEO estimates that it might only take five years for a national rollout to happen, reports Futurism.

How it came about: McDonald's purchased voice technology from the startup Apprente in 2019. From there, they built their voice assistant.

"There's still a lot of work, but (...) we feel good about the technical feasibility of it and the business case," Kempczinski said in a conference transcript from FactSet.

McDonald's isn't the first to move in this direction: White Castle and Sonic restaurants added some voice automation last year, along with Ohio's Lee's Famous Recipe Chicken Restaurant, according to voicebot.ai.

Even though they are eager to test out automation in the drive-through line at Mickey D's, Kempczinski says they aren't ready to replace line cooks who operate the fryers or grills.

"Most of those are not ready for prime time, nor will they be ready for prime time over the next five years or so," he said. "The level of investment that would be required, the cost of that equipment, we're nowhere near to what the break-even would need to be from a labor-cost standpoint, to make that a good business decision for franchisees."

One question remains — do we call the new AI "Ronald," or will it be immortalized with a new name?

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