The Foodini 3D food printer allows users to fill the printing cartridge with their own ingredients to print a wide range of fresh foods

Spotted: Imagine being able to print food into just about any shape you wanted. That future has now arrived, with the Foodini – a 3D food printer developed by Barcelona-based Natural Machines. The printer allows both professional and home chefs to print creative dishes that would be impossible to do by hand.

The Foodini prints using “ink” capsules that can be filled with a range of ingredients. The printer comes with an app with pre-loaded designs and can be updated with more designs, or users can develop their own. Users prepare the ingredients, fill the capsule, and the Foodini prints the designs. Unlike other food printers, the Foodini does not rely on pre-filled capsules, meaning cooks can use fresh ingredients.

Foodini can be used to print dishes like ravioli, pizza, burgers, crackers, cookies and even elaborate chocolate vases. Perhaps its most common use is for printing edible plate decorations. The print time per dish varies depending on its complexity, with flatter food taking a couple of minutes to print, and more intricate chocolate sculptures around 20 minutes.

While Foodini is currently used mostly in professional kitchens, its creators envision a day when it will be a useful countertop appliance in many homes. Lynette Kucsma, co-founder and CMO of Natural Machines says: “We believe that in 10 to 15 years, 3D food printers will become a common kitchen appliance in both home and professional kitchens, similar to how an oven or a microwave are common appliances in kitchens today. The printer would enable people to become food manufacturers themselves.”
While 3D printing was originally designed primarily for use in rapid prototyping, the technique is being used for an increasingly wide range of uses. At Springwise, we have covered the use of 3D for everything from chicken nuggets to eyewear made from bioplastic and even a nuclear reactor.

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Takeaway:

While not exactly the replicator from Star Trek, the Foodini does offer a way for both professional and amateur chefs to replicate many convenience foods using fresh ingredients. Of course, it can only print using materials that are the right consistency for extrusion. In professional kitchens, it’s primary use may be add visual appeal and creativity to dishes. However, it is also easy to envision a future where the Foodini is used, for example, in-stores as a mini-manufacturing plant, to print snacks or even entire meals on demand, in the customer’s choice of flavours and ingredients. Or, to print meals with very specific nutritional requirements.