

Burger robots to appear at 50 locations

16 September 2017, by Nancy Owano



(Tech Xplore)—We have been treated to a generous amount of stories announcing new advances in assembly-line robots and home-assistant robots. Smartened up with cameras and artificial intelligence, it looks like time to focus on a new breed of kitchen robots. Reports are in about how they may truly impact the restaurant trade.

Might robots prove so cost efficient and reliable that restaurant employers replace a significant number of workers with these robots?

It looks as if a marker is in the wings, with the announcement that robots called Flippy will be installed in 50 CaliBurger restaurants worldwide.

The CaliBurger patty-flipping robots are expected to roll out and replace human workers flipping burgers.

Sage Lazzaro in *Daily Mail* said CaliBurger began testing the machine earlier this year.

The team behind the robots is Miso Robotics, and a video back in March showed Flippy in action.

"Miso Robotics was founded in July, 2016 by Rob Anderson, Ryan Sinnet and David Zito as a robotic kitchen assistant developer. The company is

focused on using [artificial intelligence](#) (AI) and automation to solve the high pain points in [restaurants](#) and food preparation," wrote Mike Uy in *Pasadena Now*.

Miso Robotics on their company site describes Flippy as a kitchen assistant and shows a video with Flippy in action.

Wait, one may say, that is risky, using a robot when humans can judge the quality of their flip moves.

Thing is, Flippy is not that dumb. *ZME Science*: "Flippy uses feedback-loops that reinforce its good behavior so it gets better with each flip of the [burger](#). Unlike an assembly line robot that needs to have everything positioned in an exact ordered pattern, Flippy's machine learning algorithms allow it to pick uncooked burgers from a stack or flip those already on the grill."

Flippy can be installed in less than five minutes, said a video caption.

(An integrated system that sends orders from the counter back to the kitchen informs Flippy just how many raw burgers it should be prepping, said *ZME Science*.)

The robot is fitted with a 6-axis arm. As *ZME Science* explained, it has one arm and with six axes, has "plenty of freedom of motion" for performing tasks.

Back in March, *TechCrunch* described how its features do the job and where humans come into the picture.

"Among other functions, Flippy grabs unwrapped burger patties, [moves](#) them into position on a hot grill, keeps track of each burger's cook-time and temperature, then alerts human cooks when it's time to apply cheese or other toppings. Flippy plates burgers but doesn't wrap them or add finishing touches like lettuce, tomatoes, avocado or a restaurant's signature sauce."

So if Flippy is so adept to burger making, the question on customers' minds, as well as workers, is what is to become of the employees who do the same? As in most [robot](#)-human labor debates, there is one side calling for less panic and more thought on how displaced workers can be moved to other types of jobs as a result.

[Miso Robotics](#) CEO David Zito on *CBSSacramento* said, "[Humans](#) will always play a very critical role in the hospitality side of the business... We just don't know what the new roles will be yet in the industry."

"While many people worry that automation will eliminate jobs, Miller said new jobs will be [created](#). There will be a need for engineers, management, installation and support of these systems," wrote Elliot Maras in *FastCasual*. (John Miller is chairman and CEO of the Cali Group.)

ZME Science made the point that we might see a number of industry types undergoing change as a result of robotics: "...it looks like a whole different ball game. Artificial intelligence and robotics are disrupting multiple industries at the same time. Vehicles, health, law, food. You name it."

According to a July 6 release, "Miso Robotics plans to roll out its AI-driven robotic kitchen [assistant](#) in early 2018 and expand to more than 50 CaliBurger restaurants worldwide by the end of 2019."

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