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By Victor Fong



Image: YouTube

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You know buffets got those "cook on the spot" stations, usually for Laksa, Prata, or the good stuff that's usually better if you don't prepare them ahead?

And then sometimes you have to awkwardly wait for a cook behind the counter who randomly wandered off somewhere else, before catching a glimpse of another cook.

But because you don't know whether he's in charge of the station so you just continued waiting awkwardly.

And then he stared at you and you stare back at him.

Finally, 15 minutes later, you get your laksa.



Image: Giphy

(that's an oddly specific scenario that may or may not have happened with this socially awkward writer)

Well, have no more awkward situations with Sophie, the Laksa making robot!

No, not Sophie. She didn't learn to make Laksa.



Okay, I will destroy humans.

Image: CNBC

Sophie, which admittedly looks less scary and has no ambitions of destroying humans (yet, as far as we can tell).



Image: CNA Lifestyle YouTube channel

You select the ingredients for it to cook

How many bowls of Laksa can your *kopitiam* auntie/uncle cook per hour? I don't know also, I know for sure this robot can't replicate the grumpy attitude that accompanies my bowl of Laksa. You know what attitude I'm talking about.

My bowl of Laksa so good, you'll come back even if you suspect I spat in it.

It's the spite that gives it extra flavor.

After a car accident that left a scar on her face, her life changes. Forever. Click on the image below to watch her story:



So to understand if the robot can replicate this "spite" flavour for enhanced umami, I carefully watched Sophie cook Laksa frame by frame on the video by CNA:

So let's start with the 4 steps to how to order:

1. Pick your noodles
2. Choose your toppings
3. Place into strainer
4. Press to start cooking



Image: CNA Lifestyle YouTube channel

So, unlike ordering from Laksa stall auntie, to order from Sophie you need to put the noodles in yourself. Which explains why in this shot the hands are human.

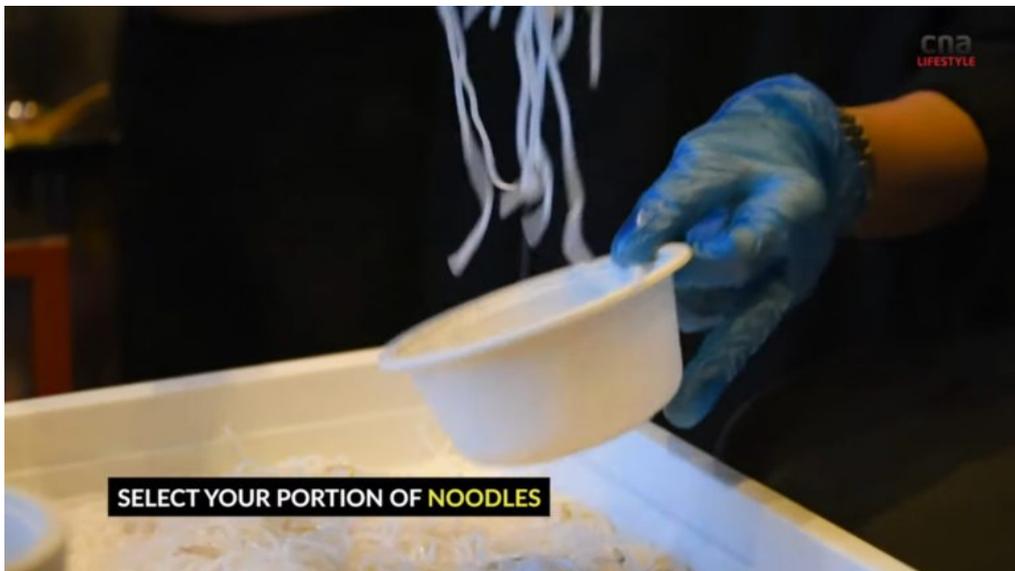


Image: CNA Lifestyle YouTube channel

And you select your toppings to be thrown in this strainer.

As you can probably tell, that finger is a human finger.



Image: CNA Lifestyle YouTube channel

And then you finally press the button.



Image: CNA Lifestyle YouTube channel

Hold up, doesn't this mean I'm doing half the cooking?

Uh... moving on. You'll see Sophie tossing in the noodles and taueh for blanching.



Image: CNA Lifestyle YouTube channel

Oi, that's 4 pieces of taueh outside the strainer. Don't waste them!

To which the robot will then dump into a bowl.



Image: CNA Lifestyle YouTube channel

And ~~attempt brutal murder in the form of stabbing~~ get some prawns on the side which will be placed in the bowl.



Image: CNA Lifestyle YouTube channel

Before ladling pre-cooked gravy into the bowl.



Image: CNA Lifestyle YouTube channel

Done.



Image: CNA Lifestyle YouTube channel

This whole process takes 45 seconds.

Created by Orange Clove and local engineering company

Orange Clove is part of Neo Group, Singapore's largest catering group, though it is unknown which local engineering company it is.

Sophie was introduced on 4 July 2019 at SMU School of Law, where Neo Group also revealed new menus for their other brands.

Chefs, the robots are coming for your jobs

Wait, wrong sub-header. I mean, it will alleviate manpower problem in the F&B industry that's always short on new recruits.

You can actually rent the noodle station, though we don't know the prices yet. Of course, this isn't limited to Laksa and they are planning on new dishes and recipes as well.

The most important part here is that while chefs can't always be on standby to be called up randomly, Sophie can be activated within 3 hours.

No rental price has yet been set for the new concept but there are already plans to cater to new dishes and recipes.

Back to the question. Are we going to be served by Sophie armies in the future? Well, from what we see so far, the Laksa gravy still needs to be prepared in advance (presumably by a real person), the ingredients still need to be laid out, and half the process still involve our human hands.

So no, at least not in the near future. While it does look like it can solve some of the manpower issues, Chef jobs are probably safe for at least 5 years.

Cooking robots are only Sophie, not *sophisticated* yet.

At least that's probably what the robot overlords want us to think.



Image: Mashable

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