

'Dinosaur tartare' and holograms: Dubai AI chef sparks awe and ire

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AFP | Dubai, United Arab Emirates

A Dubai restaurant has opened that prides itself on having the world's "first AI chef", the latest ostentatious dive into new technology in a city obsessed with being on the cutting edge of the future.

The Emirati city has become increasingly known for its growing culinary scene, with thousands of restaurants on offer from luxurious Michelin-starred eateries to greasy spoons serving up bona fide street food from across the Middle East and Asia. But at Woohoo, the brains be-



Turkish chef Serhat Karanfil works in the kitchen of Woohoo, an AI-powered restaurant in Dubai.

hind the menu is not a person but an AI programme -- known as chef Aiman -- trained on thousands of recipes and decades of culinary research and molecular gastronomy.

Chef Aiman can also optimise menus and balance flavours, according to the establishment.

The real work of preparing and serving the food, however, remains in human hands, for now. "AI is going to create better dishes than humans maybe in the future," said the restaurant's Turkish co-founder Ahmet Oytun Cakir.

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tare" meant to recreate the taste of extinct reptiles.

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Priced at roughly 50 euros (\$58), the dish tastes like a combination of raw meats and is served on a pulsating plate to appear as if it were breathing.

"It was a total surprise. It was so delicious," said customer Efe Urganlu. Along with AI-generated holograms and sci-fi animation, the heart of the neon-lit venue features a giant cylindrical computer -- presented as the digital mainframe powering the restaurant's lights and smoke shows.

"I don't believe in it"

A waiter interacts with customers at Woohoo

Woohoo's Turkish chef Serhat Karanfil oversees the cooking and the final presentation and admits that he does not always agree with the AI chef's choices and selections.

"If I taste it, for example, and it is too spicy, I talk to chef Aiman again. After we discuss, we find the right balance," he said.

Cakir has high hopes that chef Aiman will one day become "the next Gordon Ramsay -- but AI".

Not everyone in Dubai's vibrant food scene is convinced.

For Michelin-starred chef Mohamad Orfali, "there is no such thing as an AI chef". "I

the Arabic term that describes a cook's personal flair for food and their ability to conjure up exceptional meals. "Artificial intelligence lacks feelings and memories; in short, it has no nafas... It can't imbue it into food."

Dubai ideas

Orfali said he limited the use of AI in his own establishment to administrative tasks like setting the kitchen schedule and providing additional research.

"We use it as a kitchen assistant, but ultimately, it won't cook," he said.

Nonetheless, Woohoo has resonated with customers accustomed to the lavish offerings of Dubai, a tech-forward megalopolis with a proclivity for extravagance where AI has its own minister.

"Everyone is supporting these ideas here in Dubai," said Cakir.

The restaurant has also created a social media buzz, with an Instagram account dedicated to the AI Chef that features chef Aiman's avatar in videos sharing tips and recipes.

Dio, a customer who didn't give her last name, said she visited the restaurant after seeing the craze around it.

"It is such a creative concept, so I thought I must experience it myself," she said.

"The dishes were extraordinary."



Egypt trains hundreds of Palestinians for future Gaza police force

Gaza City, Palestinian Territories

Egypt is training hundreds of Palestinian police officers with an eye towards integrating them into a post-war security force in Gaza, a Palestinian official told AFP.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty announced the plan to train 5,000 officers for Gaza during talks with Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa in August.

A first group of more than 500 officers were trained in Cairo in March and since September the two-month courses have resumed to welcome hundreds more people, the Palestinian official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

He said all members of the force will be from the Gaza Strip and paid by the Palestinian Authority, which is based in Ramallah in the occupied West Bank.

"I'm very happy with the training. We want a permanent end to war and aggression, and we're eager to serve our country and fellow citizens," said a 26-year-old Palestinian police officer.

He told AFP he hoped the



Displaced Palestinian children play in the wreckage of a car in the Tel al-Hawa neighborhood, in the southern part of Gaza City,

security force would be "independent, loyal only to Palestine and not subject to external alliances or objectives".

"We received outstanding operational training, with modern equipment for border surveillance," said a Palestinian lieutenant who also requested anonymity for security reasons, as did everyone interviewed by AFP.

The lieutenant, who left Gaza with his family last year, said the training focused on the fallout of the October 2023 Hamas attack on Israel that triggered the war and the damage done to the Pal-

estinian cause.

Hamas's attack on Israel resulted in the deaths of 1,221 people.

Israel's retaliatory assault on Gaza has killed at least 70,100 people, according to figures from the territory's health ministry that the UN considers reliable.

'Protecting the dream'

The training also highlighted the role of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and stressed the importance of "pro-

tecting the dream of creating" a fully sovereign and independent Palestinian state.

A senior security official from the Palestinian Authority confirmed that its president Mahmud Abbas had instructed Interior Minister Ziad Hab al-Reeh to coordinate with Egypt on the training.

During talks sponsored by Egypt late last year, the Palestinian movements -- including the two main ones, Hamas and Abbas's Fatah -- agreed to a force of around 10,000 police officers.

Egypt would train half of them while the other 5,000 would come from the police force in Gaza, which has been under Hamas control since the militant group seized power there in 2007.

Under the agreement, the security force would be supervised by a committee of technocrats approved by the Palestinian movements.

A senior Hamas official confirmed to AFP that the movement supported "the details regarding security and management of the Gaza Strip" agreed during the talks.

The subject was also addressed in US President Donald

Trump's peace plan, which led to last month's fragile Gaza ceasefire, and was later endorsed by a UN Security Council resolution.

Europe too

The plan notably authorises the creation of an international force that would be responsible for securing border areas and demilitarising Gaza.

The European Union also wants to train up to 3,000 Palestinian police officers in the Gaza Strip under a scheme similar to one it already runs in the West Bank, an EU official told AFP.

The EU has financed a police training mission in the West Bank since 2006, with a budget of around 13 million euros (\$15 million).

But many details remain up in the air.

A Hamas official questioned to AFP the possibility of an agreement with Israel on the precise details of a police force in Gaza.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government opposes any role for Hamas or the Palestinian Authority in Gaza after the war ends.

AFP journalists have regularly observed that Hamas maintains armed men in Gaza to ensure

traffic flows and to mediate disputes between residents, effectively providing a form of law enforcement.

Hamas has said it no longer wants to govern Gaza but added that it does not intend to disappear and remains a central part of Palestinian political life.

On the thorny issue of disarmament, Hamas has said it is not opposed to handing over part of its arsenal, but only as part of a Palestinian political process.



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