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ANOTHER DIMENSION: 3D PRINTING GOES GLOBAL

While many are hailing the arrival of 3D printers in restaurant kitchens as a potential quantum leap forward others are reserving judgement, and wonder whether increased mechanization may detract from the artisan's craft. One fact is clear: 3D printers can provide a new and effective tool for operators in a variety of foodservice segments.

Balancing technology

“Throughout time, culinary professionals have created tools to play with their food,” says Arlene Spiegel FCSI of Arlene Spiegel & Associates in New York. “With the aid of computers and printers, product development can reach new heights of creativity. 3D has the advantage over one and two dimensional design as it allows for: architectural presentations; testing of the structural integrity of ingredients used; and tweaking before costly production.”

Playing with their food

Restaurant operators are interested in 3D printing for two primary reasons, according to Lynette Kucsma, co-

founder and CMO of Natural Machines in Barcelona, Spain, the manufacturer of the Foodini 3D food printer. One is because the technology allows them to customise ingredients and presentation that they cannot do by hand. The other is the automation, which cuts production time and all but guarantees high quality and consistency.

Starting at the top

The future of 3D printing in restaurants then comes into sharper focus. It will serve as a splendid tool for some restaurants in some segments in some instances, permitting flair and originality of presentation while freeing up kitchen staff for other tasks. But like many technical innovations over the years, it will likely prove to be a more evolutionary than revolutionary.

Look for 3D printing to join the host of other innovative technologies to find their way into restaurant kitchens around the world over the last few decades in helping operators improve product quality and consistency. ■