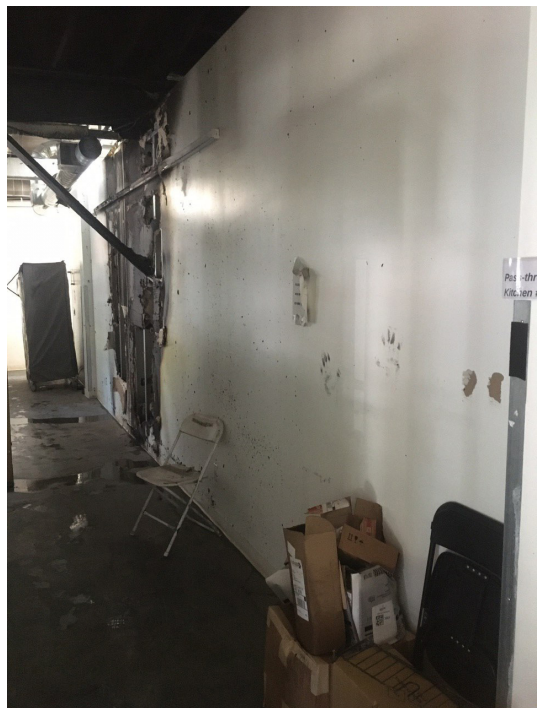


ghost ops: counterfeit kitchens in the pandemic age



a report on L.A.'s cloud kitchen scene, prepared by Bakersfield.

a disgruntled employee checks your phone and retrieves a paper bag from dozens of indistinguishable others cooling on an industrial U-Line shelf. You race back to your car, speed to the customer’s Spanish-style duplex in Silverlake, drop the food—contactless—on their porch, and make out with about \$10 in earnings.

Welcome to “cloud kitchens”; the “future” of delivery-only dining and newest *invisible enemy* of the techno-capitalist age.

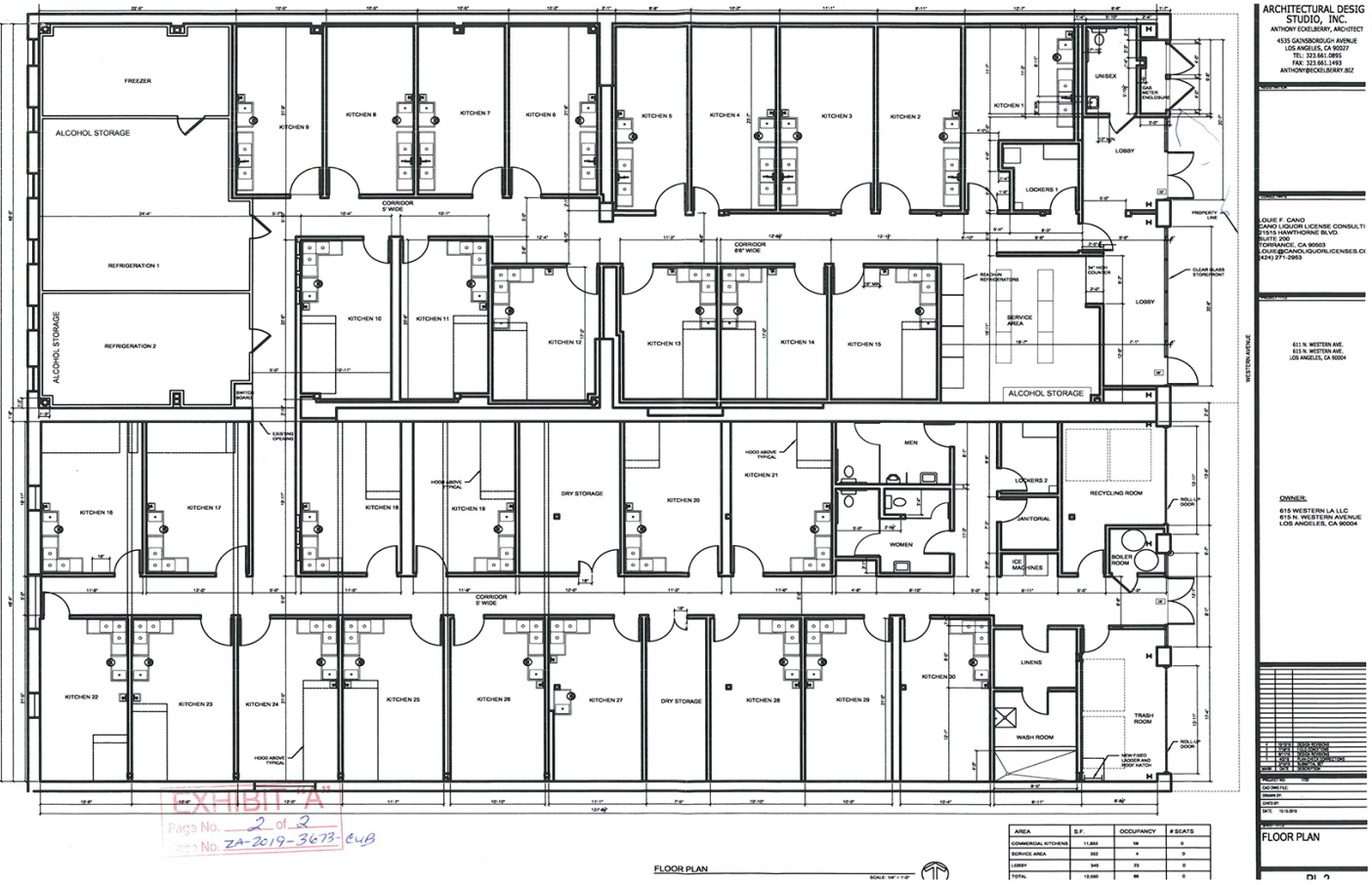
WTF IS A CLOUD KITCHEN?

Generally speaking, cloud kitchens, ghost kitchens, or dark kitchens, so called for their elusive status, are food preparation facilities for delivery-only food service. Cloud kitchens have been around for a while, but 615 N Western Ave. exemplifies a new and rapidly expanding cloud kitchen model: a multi-tenant real-estate operation that hosts numerous tiny, commercial-grade kitchens under one roof. At 615 N Western Ave., 30 individual micro kitchens prepare delivery-only menu items for one or more virtual restaurant brands (and sometimes, for conventional establishments, too).

Imagine driving for Postmates or Caviar or any online food ordering platform in the midst of a global pandemic. Imagine that you live in Los Angeles, where neighborhoods are separated by vast freeway constructions alongside which houseless inhabitants have built makeshift homes from discarded Amazon boxes. Imagine, if you will, crossing the dismal, four-lane gulf of tarmac to collect an order of “Krispy Heaven” from a restaurant called Krispy Rice in Hollywood.

Except that when you arrive at the designated address, Krispy Rice is nowhere to be found. In its place, at 615 N Western Ave., sits an unmarked building. There’s a line of people outside —mostly silent, middle-aged men clutching smartphones, hovering 6-feet-ish apart.

Inside is unsettling in its blankness. Mounted on a low wooden table, a solitary black tablet displays 20 or 30 restaurant names, one of which corresponds, hopefully, to your order. Like a self check-in kiosk at the airport or increasingly, at the doctor’s office, your remote interaction triggers a ticket at a window further along the wait line. You queue a while longer, anxious that your customer, expecting prompt service, might ding your tip for the delay. In front and behind you, other mute delivery drivers pace on the spot; a vague and abstract aura of hostility emanates from the line, threatening to dissolve the studied equanimity that unites you. Eventually you make it to the window, where



<Floor plan for 615 N Western Ave. CloudKitchens facility>

CK: UNLOCKED

In the context of late stage, free market capitalism; in the context of widespread ecological and epidemiological crisis; in the context of Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos and Peter Thiel; in the context of Jeffrey Epstein, no less, there is nothing, on the surface, particularly novel or particularly evil about cloud kitchens as a concept. Sure, the building at 615 N Western Ave. was suspiciously absent of signage. Sure, the energy of the place was unnerving. But it’s hard to say why, exactly, we felt compelled to return. Maybe the pandemic had heightened our sensitivity to threat? Either way, the hidden labyrinth of stovetops and extractor fans was enough to give rise to an amorphous unease that drove us back the following day. We wanted to find out who owned the facility. Actually, we wanted to talk to a staff member, or someone that could shed light on the building’s opaque services. The line of harried gig workers was shorter this time, but we were still met with resistance at the kiosk. “I can’t really talk about it,” the guy working the line whispered, peering down the row behind us. “The owner doesn’t like to give interviews.”

As it turns out, there is urgent reason to investigate the cloud kitchen hub at 615 N Western Ave. And as it turns out, the owner is ex-Uber Technologies CEO Travis Kalanick. In fact, Kalanick is affiliated with at least three cloud kitchens around L.A., operated by his secretive startup named CloudKitchens®, which bills itself as “a turnkey solution for delivery-only restaurants.” According to food blog HNGRY, the company upholds a strict gag policy that prohibits employees from listing their jobs on LinkedIn or engaging with press. So while there are other cloud kitchen endeavors operational in L.A. (Google’s Kitchen United, for example), CloudKitchens® stands out as the most cryptic, which is to say, the most ominous. That 615 N Western Ave. feels like an inhospitable food depot isn’t necessarily surprising given the company’s entanglement with major figures in the tech investment realm. With a little help (to the tune of \$400 million dollars) from Yasir Al-Rumayyan via Saudi Arabia’s sovereign-wealth fund, CloudKitchens® is poised to redefine the middle-class dining experience as we know it, which might very well mean destroy it.

CLOUDKITCHENS®: A HISTORY

CloudKitchens® emerged around 2015, co-founded by Boingo founder Sky Dayton and Kalanick’s pal Diego G. Berdakin. Berdakin’s CV presents him as a rare millennial success: a serial techno-preneur who invested early in Uber, Postmates, Dropbox...; custodian of the Berdakin Family Foundation, his family’s million-dollar private philanthropy outfit; and even adjunct professor in cinematic arts at the University of Southern California, proving once and for all the immense degree to which academia and art have capitulated to the financial sector.

LLC History

② a. Date your LLC was formed (MM, DD, YYYY): 11/6/2015

b. State, country or other place where your LLC was formed: Delaware

Service of Process

③ a. Diego Berdakin

b. 101 S. Rossmore Ave.

LLC Addresses

④ a. 101 S. Rossmore Ave.

b. 101 S. Rossmore Ave.

Read and sign below:

I am authorized to sign this document under the laws of the state of California.

https://www.ftb.ca.gov.

Registered LLCs cannot provide in California "professional services," as defined by California Corporations Code sections 13401(a) and 13401.3.

For questions about this form, go to www.sos.ca.gov/business/befiling-tips.htm

LLC Name to be used for this LLC in California

① a. Delta Gamma Bravo Holdings, LLC

b. Alternate Name

LLC History

② a. Date your LLC was formed (MM, DD, YYYY): 11/6/2015

b. State, country or other place where your LLC was formed: Delaware

Secretary of State

Statement of Information

(Limited Liability Company)

LLC-12

18-B31220

FILED

APR 13, 2018

In the office of the Secretary of State of the State of California

IMPORTANT — Read instructions before completing this form.

Filing Fee — \$20.00

Copy Fees — First page \$1.00; each attachment page \$0.50; Certification Fee — \$5.00 plus copy fees

1. Limited Liability Company Name (Enter the exact name of the LLC. If you registered in California using an alternate name, enter that name.)

KITCHEN CONCEPT, LLC

2. 12-Digit Secretary of State File Number

201606110407

3. State, Foreign Country or Place of Organization (only if formed outside of California)

DELAWARE

4. Business Addresses

a. Street Address of Principal Office (Do not list a P.O. Box)

324 S. Beverly Drive, #714

b. Mailing Address of LLC (If different than item 4a)

324 S. Beverly Drive, #714

5. Manager(s) or Member(s)

a. First Name, if an individual (Do not complete item 5b)

Diego

b. Entity Name (Do not complete item 5b)

DELTA GAMMA BRAVO HOLDINGS LLC

Untitled ENTERTAINMENT

FIRST CITIZENS BANK

350 South Beverly



After establishing Delta Gamma Bravo Holdings LLC, Berdakin purchased an 11,386 sq. ft. warehouse spanning 1840-1848 W Washington Blvd. in the Pico-Union district of L.A., allocated as a “State Enterprise Zone” (meaning businesses here can qualify for operational tax incentives). Berdakin’s business entity “CloudKitchens | Urban Kitchens” was registered to the warehouse, the interior of which which was then remodeled to accommodate 27 individual commercial micro-kitchens.

Unassuming, uninviting and unmarked, the CloudKitchens hub at 1842 W Washington Blvd. faces the historic Angelus-Rosedale Cemetery. As a solitary gig worker laboring in the midst of global catastrophe, one experiences a profound and lonely irony in collecting a stranger’s food from an anonymous ghost kitchen that exits to a verge of crumbling headstones.



<Angelus-Rosedale Cemetary as seen from 1842 W Washington Blvd.>

In the nascent days of the CloudKitchens venture, Travis Kalanick was embroiled in multiple lawsuits regarding, among other allegations, failure of fiduciary duties as CEO at Uber Technologies. He officially resigned in June 2017, plunging his wealth into new venture fund 10100 (apparently named after his childhood address—a sentimentality only marginally undermined by its resemblance to binary code).

One of the first maneuvers made by 10100 was to invest in City Storage Systems, the real-estate oriented parent company of CloudKitchens, likewise co-founded by Dayton and Berdakin. Outlined in characteristically clipped verbiage, CSS’s mission is to source “distressed real estate assets” to repurpose for new food service businesses. In March 2018, Kalanick became CEO of CSS, securing a controlling interest in the company with a \$150 million investment.

GHOST OPS

Kalanick’s arrival to the cloud kitchen scene appears to have kicked opened the door for other local entrepreneurs. Between 2018 and 2019, a slew of early adopters on-boarded with 1842 W Washington Blvd., including Robert Niksefat & Kevin Khalili of Alliance Hospitality Group; Rob Krauss of the Virtual Food Group; serial entrepreneur and founder of pandemic-inspired survivalist subscription service Bunkr, Zev Norotsky; Harrison Litvak of LIT Media; and John Kolaski, affiliate of mega-conglomerate SBE Entertainment Group, among others, all of whom registered new LLCs from which to launch cloud kitchen ventures. With company names like “Impasta” and “GhostGrub”, these initiators signal cavalier complicity in a network of at best, ambiguous (at worst, outright deceptive) practices. If an imposter is a person who pretends to be someone else, especially for fraudulent gain, then Impasta is probably *not* your mom’s spaghetti.

One of the more prominent newcomers to the ghost kitchen scene is Sam Nazarian, founder, chairman and CEO of hospitality conglomerate SBE. In November of 2019, Nazarian partnered with real estate investment trust Simon Property Group to form “Creating Culinary Communities”, aka C3. “I view C3 as the Netflix-equivalent of food and beverage,” Nazarian told PR Newswire, “as we focus on constantly creating culinary content that can be delivered to consumers via non-traditional distribution channels.” Serving as an incubator of “single operator, multi-branded” limited service culinary brands, the company intends to launch scores of ghost kitchens across 200 locations by the end of 2021. Operating from micro kitchens at 615 N Western Ave, C3 produces menu items for Krispy Rice and a handful of other virtual restaurant brands.

Unraveling the clandestine entities behind virtual food brands is difficult but not impossible, and one can loosely group ghost kitchen operators/restaurant groups into three tiers. Operators in each tier have different motivations driving their investment in the cloud kitchen economy:

- 1. Entrepreneurial/start-up restaurant groups majorly focused on virtual brands. These are tech and lifestyle investors with links to Silicon Valley, eager to pitch a stake in an emerging billion-dollar market. They're bold, experimental, actively engaged in A/B testing for novel restaurant concepts. Emphasis on profit over quality/experience.
- 2. Major and mid-level franchise groups extending pre-existing menus, seeking to capitalize on the expanding delivery-only market. They have strong preexisting business models and consumer brand loyalty. They're in the game to expand their reach/delivery zone at low cost with low risk.
- 3. Independents and individuals seeking to launch homegrown ventures. These are largely mom n' pop grafters or individuals with zany food visions attracted by low overhead costs and reduced barrier to entry. Emphasis on building an identity around food. Serious interest in cuisine/food culture/customer experience.

From the consumer's perspective, there is no viable method to determine if a burger is made with love or lack.

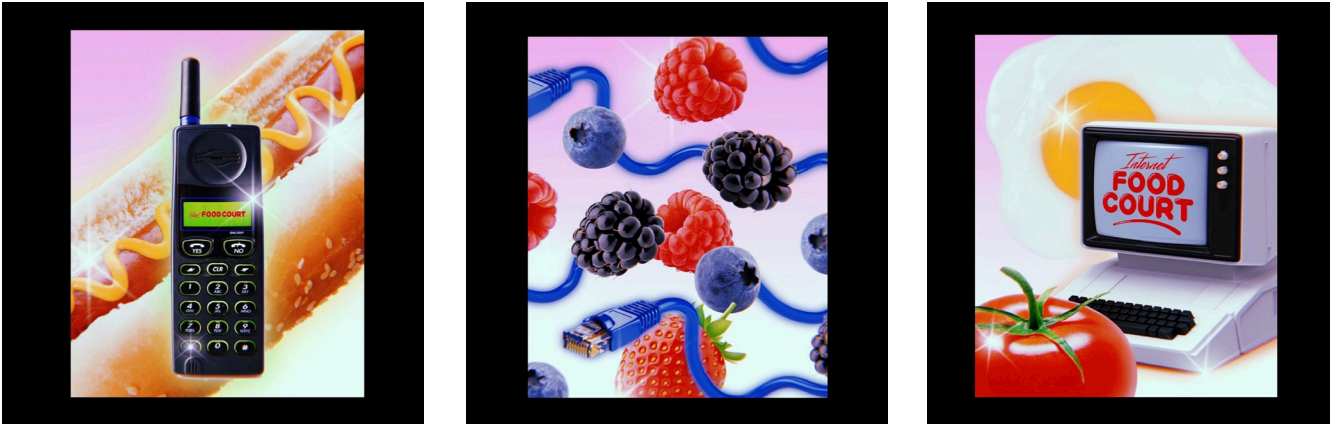
LOW-RES GAZPACHO

If 1842 W Washington Blvd. is ground zero for L.A.'s accelerated cloud kitchen scene, best described as a matryoshka-esque nest of start-ups and their illustriously titled virtual restaurant concepts, then 615 N Western Ave.— CloudKitchens' other operational L.A. location—is its four-million dollar *enfant terrible*.

Plunked on a busy thoroughfare in Hollywood, the 12, 550 sq. ft. property (formerly Roman Deco furniture warehouse) has been subjected to a few failed branding experiments executed in a spirit of apoplexy unique to Los Angeles' "creative directors". Temporarily unveiled as West & Mel Food Co., the space was transformed earlier this year in a 24-hr media snafu implicating "World famous designer 2 the starz" Ryan Haskins. It happened like this: a month into L.A.'s shelter-in-place mandate, while we were preoccupied with survival, 615 N Western Ave. reformed, by way of pop bubble decals, into a socially-distanced dine-out marketplace dubbed "Internet Food Court" — said to be "like a mall food court, except less mall and more internet." Seemingly overnight, though, as if mere hallucination, the project was scrubbed from existence — Internet Food Court was cancelled. Kalanick's team issued a new statement denying any prior knowledge of the campaign. It was the work of a rogue employee, they claimed. Per CloudKitchens' M.O., Haskins is unable to speak of the project.



<Chart depicting major sub-groups, including C3 and Salted, operating within the cloud kitchen marketplace.>



<Above: 615 N Western Ave. as Internet Food Court (c. Reuters, 2020). Below: promotional material for IFC by Ryan Haskins.>

But this is 2020, and this is the INTERNET Food Court, after all. Traces of the project linger. The question then isn't whether or not IFC existed, but why won't anyone discuss it? As is often the case in the realm of conspiracy, the answer might be startling obvious. It might have something to do with nothing. It might have something to do with the nothing that branding conceals. Something akin to Fyre Festival. To Monstera Deliciosa. To JUUL. To the Kardashians. To Donald Trump.

The conviction that one can make something from nothing, and vice versa, has particular purchase in L.A.—a city of real estate transactions, McMansion builds and wildfire-related teardowns; a city where movie sets—full buffet spread included—are assembled and deconstructed in a day. In the last few years, it feels as though encounters with pre-packaged emptiness have become the norm. At the outset, there's a thrill in locating the new. Invariably, though, we discover the truth; invariably we are left mute and bereft, with a cognitive dissonance so crippling that we flock to virtual therapists advertised on Instagram. In many ways, CloudKitchens crystalizes this trend, propagating virtual restaurant concepts that brazenly populate online food delivery dashboards as little more than visual ciphers, telegraphing their nothingness as a coat of arms.

CLOUD NOTHINGS

Take, for example, Ryan Haskins' other CloudKitchens related project. In August 2019, Haskins began sharing graphics for his "re-brand"* of \$ushi \$nob — "THE WORLD'S BEST \$USHI" (*There is no evidence that "\$ushi \$nob" existed at all before this date). In this project, Haskins goes ham with his irreverent visual syntax that mashes a dizzying range of pop cultural references with decontextualized stock graphics. The results are undeniably captivating, but there's something disconcerting at play. The brand ethos eschews even the most restrained inflection of cultural sensitivity in favor of provocative sloganeering, clearly intended to appeal to a gen-z consumer base that wants to be in on the joke—of which they themselves, ostensibly, are the butt.

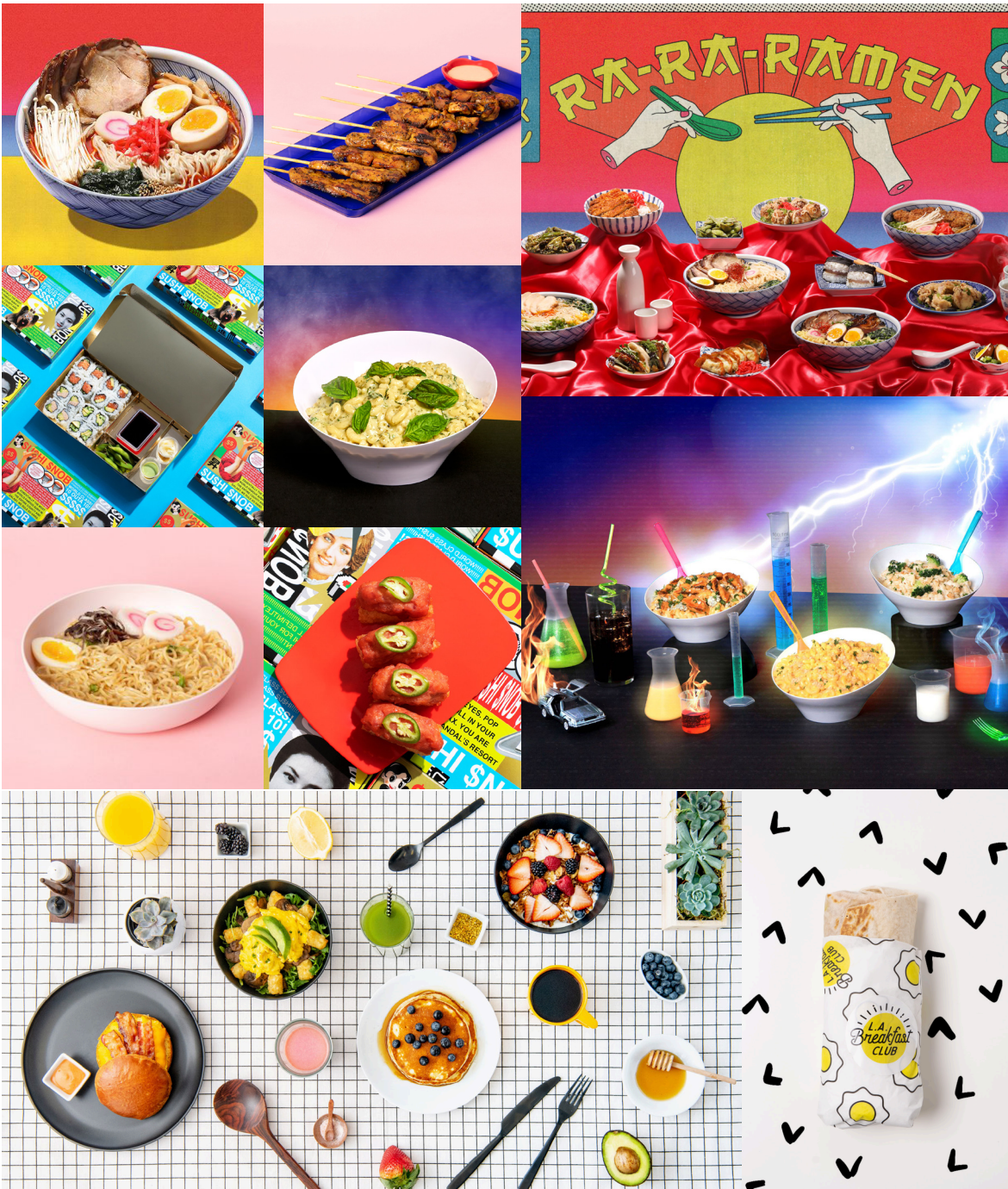
\$ushi \$nob is possibly the most extreme example of style over substance in the CloudKitchens arena. For a virtual restaurant with a total of 12 reviews spread over Yelp and Google (well, eleven really, since one reviewer is Ryan Haskins himself) it's really more of a hypothetical restaurant with a vast website retail store featuring approximately 20 \$ushi\$nob branded items, ranging from beach towels to fanny packs. Why so much merch for a restaurant no one's heard of? In the 2020 ghost kitchen economy, design is the product. The specifics of a menu, the integrity of the cuisine—both, ultimately, are of little concern. The branding signals only to itself, to a mood, an energy, a current, an idea of an experience. Ghost kitchen food providers have finally, it seems, relinquished the tired conceit of authenticity—a conceit tethered to attitudes from another time—and embraced the ubiquity and genericism of our contemporary, globalized industrial food economy.

<\$ushi \$nob branding by Ryan Haskins>



BITCH DON'T GRILL MY CHEESE

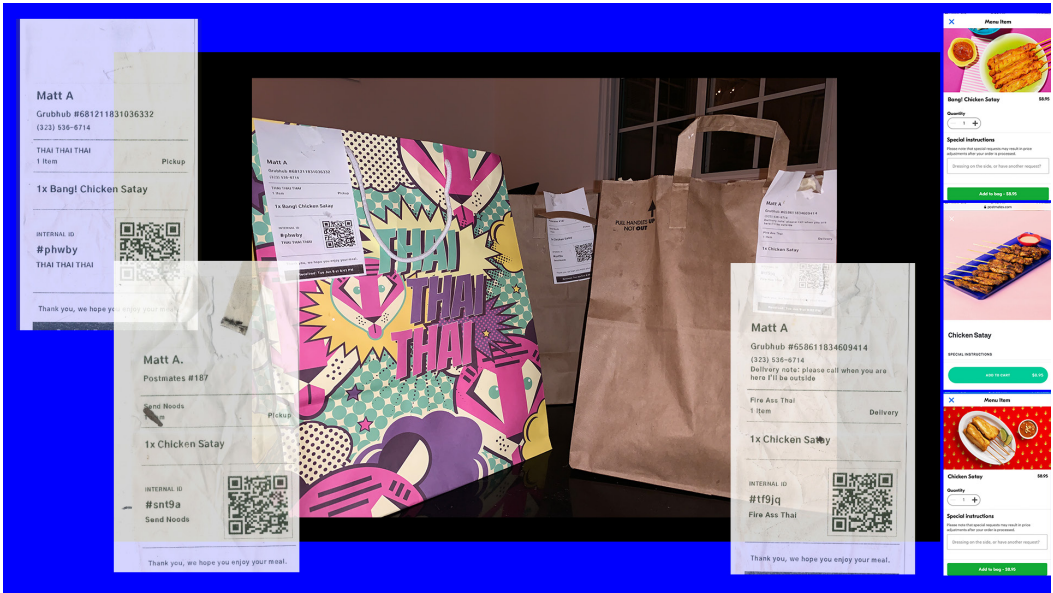
May 2020. You're idly browsing the Postmates dashboard. Now UberEats. Now GrubHub. Why are there so many restaurants with cringe edgelord names like Fire Ass Thai, Send Noods, Best Damn Grilled Cheese, F#ck Carbs, F#ck Gluten, Bad Mutha Clucka? Funny how they each list 615 N Western Ave. as their address, no explanation. What irks most, though, is the visual similarity of their marketing. Your eyes balk at the repetition of saturated pop colors, diagonal lead lines and benign, plate-as-pattern arial view abstraction. It's as though each restaurant was branded according to a plug-and-play Design Foundations template: a-political geometric abstraction meets vaporwave netflix-and-chill. A kind of zillennial geo-pop, defined by copy-paste optics that direct emphasis away from the photographic image, which is to say away from the millennial Yelp-foodie photographic trend, which is to say away from the food item itself, towards an abstracted design graphic. Instead, the food product becomes one visual element among others in a highly choreographed yet extremely banal composition. In this sense, the aesthetic approach mimics the ideological relation CloudKitchens has to cuisine and the culinary experience at large, where food is secondary to brand identity. In an era marred by bombastic false promises (of civil rights, social justice, better jobs, free healthcare) Silicon Valley wagers that we've departed from sensory pleasure as a value marker of the dining experience, privileging optics and convenience instead; a productivity inspired framework that birthed such wonders as Soylent and lunch break yoga.



Of late, CloudKitchens has aided the release of ever more ridiculous ghost kitchen concepts into the virtual marketplace, concepts like “Cheese Shell Tacos by the Seashore” and “WTF is a Quesorito?!”, which take existing cultural cuisines and combine them into increasingly novel, bizarre and borderline offensive interpolations. Sometimes, in the absence of a website or Yelp review page, one can accept the more palliative notion of “WTF is a Quesorito?!” as an item of pure image exchange value floating in an empty utopia of on-demand clickery, a la TurboSquid; one can dismiss the fact that a vaguely associated, barely edible foodstuff exists somewhere, someplace, in relation to this image, corrupting its pristine existence with possible viral contagions, COVID-19 or at best, bacterial salmonella.

DECEPTION 5G

Arguably the most pernicious aspect of the cloud kitchen phenomenon is the proliferation of shadow restaurant brands. Nowhere on any third party delivery app does it state, for example, that THAI THAI THAI, SEND NOODS, and FIRE ASS THAI are in fact hollow virtual restaurant concepts operating from a single micro kitchen. Possessed with an unhinged desire for proof on behalf of all Thai food aficionados, we ordered the chicken satay option from each of these “restaurants”. Unsurprisingly, despite each order having arrived in its own packaging from its own restaurant “brand”, the food was identical. What’s more, it looked nothing like advertised.



As a customer, it’s one thing to accept that your \$ushi \$nob sashimi might not be the freshest slice you’ve ever tasted, it’s another entirely to realize that \$ushi \$nob doesn’t exist in any affirmable way, and that your day-old yellowfin was probably sliced by an anonymous contracted staffer in a micro “execution kitchen” that services a smorgasbord of generic fish food concepts.


This kind of rampant outsourcing is especially difficult to trace when the ghosts leave the [cloud] kitchen. Increasingly, existing brick and mortar restaurants around the city, inconspicuous in their stature, find themselves operating as ghost kitchens for virtual restaurant brands, having been approached by entities with vested interest in scaling the cloud kitchen enterprise. Case in point: THAI THAI THAI is also prepared by Chuan Chim Thai Cafe in East Hollywood, Chao Krung in Beverly Grove, and Emporium Thai in Westwood (though none of these restaurants’ websites or storefronts advertise this fact).

When consumers realize they’ve been duped—fooled by colorful creative direction—the comedown is almost as bad as the aftertaste (though not nearly as painful as some of the documented cases of food poisoning attributed to these kitchens). The real kicker, evidenced in much of the start-up gig realm and not necessarily unique to CloudKitchens, is a total lack of accountability on the part of the service provider. Contingent not only on clarity, but also on transparency, there is no one to contact, no identifiable chef to talk to, no actual restaurant to phone, no name, no interface, no nothing. The true extent of the farce is revealed when an allergy-prone customer attempts to call her “local” restaurant and reaches a young woman in Manilla.

Why is the quality of food supplied by virtual restaurant brands so overwhelmingly low? In the cloud kitchen industry, one can correlate extreme decentralization, minimal regulation and poor customer experience. Given the fragmented operations of dispersed restaurant concepts, it’s unlikely that cooks will ever interact with customers or witness the food’s destination, begging the question, why should they care? Quality control, at the end of the day, relies on a minimum consent by the participating workforce.






And yet something radical is occurring. Reading through Yelp reviews for some of the worst-offender cloud kitchen brands, it’s stunning to witness delivery app drivers advocate on behalf of their ordering customers, publicly vocalizing their discontent with the restaurant vendor. Whether in solidarity or in fear of losing work, third-party delivery drivers have flipped the script, reorganizing traditional labor relations by rallying against the noticeable deficit of cloud kitchen labor force accountability.








Kevin J. Culver

City, CA




4/16/2019





0 friends


11 reviews

I was working for post mates and there was about 150 people waiting in line at midnight. I'm not sure the rating is fair because I've never had any food here but at the same time I'm baffled on how so many different restaurants can be in one small building. Regardless of that the place was completely overwhelmed, and most people had been waiting for an hour to pick up the costumers orders.

 Useful






 Funny

 Cool






Ankush K.

Central LA, West Hollywood, CA



4/26/2019




First to Review


The "churros" are without a doubt the absolute worst thing there. First of all, a churro is NOT a toasted tortilla wrapped with a caramel filling...


Like what is that? It's disgusting is what it is. But according to Late July Munchies, a caramel filled tortilla is as churro as you can get.

I had a feeling this place was too good to be true and I'm sad to say my feeling was correct.

Don't waste your time or money.

 Useful

 Funny 1

 Cool

Jonathan H.
 West Hollywood, CA
 106 friends
 11 reviews
 4 photos

★☆☆☆☆ 7/28/2019
First to Review

Krispy Rice

2.6

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

14 reviews

Write a review

Sort by: Most relevant ▾

All

sushi 6

box 3

Megan Mats


Local Guide · 51 reviews · 135 photos

4.0 · 10 · 1 week ago


I was thoroughly disappointed. I paid \$40 plus delivery and tip for this box of sushi and it tasted horrible. I got sick to my stomach from the fish and barely even ate any of it because I could tell it wasn't quality. The packaging was the only thing that was nice. Everything else was a sad disappointment. I feel sorry writing this review during these times, but I have to be honest. Y Katsuya should not be putting their name on this place.

Like

1



Susan M.
West Hollywood, CA
136 friends
145 reviews
18 photos



8/24/2019
photo

Really regretting ordering DoorDash delivery from here.

You have to ask why isn't this an in-person location. Something sketch about late-night food options that are strictly delivery. I imagine whoever owns this place is trying to take advantage of everyone's desire to have healthier options for pizza.

BECAUSE my pizza was more of a soggy tortilla with a lot of cheese. The cauliflower crust was absolutely disgusting. It was soggy and cold.

Really disappointed.



Max K.

Venice, Los Angeles, United States

 0 friends
  1 review







5/28/2020

They have the worst service. I worked as a postmates driver to do a pickup and they gave my order to someone else by the time I arrived. They told me to wait 20 min they were going to remake it. I came back inside after waiting in my car and they said that someone already picked up the order and it shows my account when I didn't even pick it up. they also said that they were never remembering the food. They are idiots, and they give orders away without checking the right order number to random people. Inconsistent service and a waste of time to me and the customer waiting on their food that was magically given away for free.

 Useful 2
  Funny 1
  Cool

Maria E.
East Hollywood, Los Angeles, United States
👤 0 friends
👍 2 reviews

☆☆☆☆ 5/28/2020

Idiots work there!!!!!! My order was given away to someone else and when I confronted them, they didn't want to remake my order, even though they said they would. I can't stress this enough, they are just completely ignorant towards their mistakes and I the customer who wasted more than half an hour ended up not getting my food. Idiot employees!! This restaurant needs to hire whole new set of staff who actually have some brain cells left.

👍 Useful 1 🗨️ Funny 1 😬 Cool

Jeneva M.
Sanford, Los Angeles, United States
0 friends
1 review
1 photo

6/8/2020
1 photo

I ordered well done ... I was so excited to get my food. The delivery was ok & packaging was amazing... Food looked picture perfect... I took a bite and all I see is raw meat.... I expected my burger to be Well done! I'm disappointed... Everything else was great but my burger was Raw



A screenshot of a Yelp review for a restaurant named "Crispy Rice". The restaurant has a 2.6 star rating from 14 reviews, with a "Most relevant" sort order. The reviewer, Kate Hardie, gave a 1-star review dated 1 month ago. Her review text reads: "Fish overly warm. And someone tossed a random opened bottle of beverage into our bag of food and then stapled it shut. Clearly this company is not following protocols during a pandemic... not even a drink on their menu so it can't be a mistaken order. It's a sports drink." The review includes a thumbs up icon and the number 2. The reviewer's profile picture and name "Kate Hardie" are visible, along with the text "1 review".



Max F.

Los Angeles, CA

373 friends

2 reviews



Gyjs L.

Los Angeles, CA

164 friends

114 reviews

Mickenzie H.
Downtown, Culver City, CA
0 friends
2 reviews

8/9/2019

Ordered from doordash. Ordered a salad but I got a pizza instead with all the ingredients I chose for the salad. Is it a sick joke?


Useful 4 Funny 5 Cool

9/9/2019

I ordered from UberEats. I think similar problem as the other reviewers. The portion size was super small. And it took double amount of time I was quoted. They forgot cheese I added to bill. Also the pita that was \$1-\$3 it was a size of cracker. I couldn't eat it. It was cold and old. They charge \$1 for a fork and napkin too. Do Not Order From Here. What a waste. Not worth \$15-\$20.

1/10/2020

I have had my order from here messed up three separate times now. They never make the salad with the ingredients as advertised and you do not get what you are paying for. This place is a joke and I will never be ordering from here again.



Brayden L.
Burbank, CA
5 friends
44 reviews
2 photos





 8/5/2019

Eating this pizza is one of the most significant bummers of my life. I have had plenty of cauliflower crust pizzas and this one was nearly inedible. It has a rubbery texture, has no "bite" and despite appearing cooked tastes totally undercooked. I really want to love this pizza as the nutritional value is exceptional, but after two slices I think my journey ends here.

 Useful
  Funny
  Cool



Lauren A.

Los Angeles, United States

10 friends

2 reviews

11 photos

6/7/2020

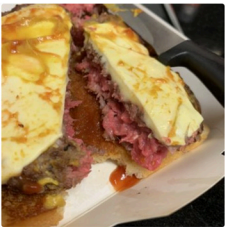
3 photos

I rarely write reviews on here but I am so beyond disgusted with my order that I had to make sure no one else experienced this. We ordered two burgers. I ordered a cheeseburger (well done because any ordered topped beef makes me sick) and 1 impossible burger with all the toppings.

What I got was a COMPLETELY RAW UNCOOKED burger. The meat was literally RED! I gagged the second I bit in and realized.

The impossible burger was completely dry just meat and cheese. No sauces or toppings. And one sad tiny bun that barely covered half of the meat.

I cannot believe how disgusting and foul this place was. NEVER ORDER FROM HERE.



A screenshot of a Yelp review. The reviewer's name is 'Angus K.' from 'Hollywood, Los Angeles'. The review is dated '3/8/2020' and has 4 stars. The text of the review reads: 'We walked from our house all the way over there thinking they had opened a dog haus in our neighborhood, but nope. It's not an actual restaurant where you can sit down. It's some kind of weird distopian food kiosk thing where you order through an app and get food from any number of places through window that looks like something out of a check cashing place... There are several places on yelp listed at this address as though they are restaurants. But they're not. It's like some kind of Uber Eats where you pick up your food instead of having it delivered. It's weird and creepy and a disappointment. I hope this kind of thing doesn't catch on... I wish there were an actual Dog Haus location in this neighborhood.'



Dayna T.
Glendale, CA
32 friends
26 reviews
17 photos

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ 12/22/2019

This is NOT A RESTAURANT, it is a food hub for companies like Postmates, Caviar, Doordash, GrubHub, etc.

It's open to the public, not just delivery drivers.

Think of this place as a one stop shop.


Multiple restaurants in ONE building.

The building has about 24 kitchens. Where they prepare The Hala Guys, Chick-Fil-A, Organica Tocaya, etc.




The next time you receive your food delivery, just be aware that it may have not been prepared from the restaurant. Maybe just a factory posing as the restaurant. Pretty nasty if you ask me. They have these food hubs all throughout the city.

 Useful 3 Funny 1 Cool 1





A screenshot of a Yelp review for "Krispy Rice". The header shows the restaurant name "Krispy Rice" and a button to "Write a review". Below this, the rating is "2.6" with four stars (two yellow, two grey) and "14 reviews". A filter bar shows "All" selected, with "sushi 6" and "box 3" as options. The first review is by "michelle milchan" with a green profile picture, 1 review, and a date of "5 days ago". The review text says: "We waited 2.5 hours for mediocre sushi- don't recommend at all". It has 1 thumbs up and 0 thumbs down. The second review is by "Isabel Lebatto Barrios" with a green profile picture, 6 reviews, and a date of "4 weeks ago". The review text says: "Terrible terrible sushi. I paid 30 bucks for something I couldn't even eat. Please stay away from this place." It has 1 thumbs up and 1 thumbs down. The third review is by "Hyewon Ahn" with a purple profile picture, 5 reviews, and a date of "a month ago". The review text says: "not fresh and rice was over cooked I couldn't eat it!". It has 1 thumbs up and 1 thumbs down.




Christian R. Resedale, MD


 79 friends
 5 reviews
 1 photo

4/6/2020

 1 photo


AVOID THIS PLACE AT ALL COSTS. Especially if you are a courier for Postmates, UberEats, etc.. This place is nothing more than one of those soulless commissary kitchens that make food for restaurants to give to unsuspecting customers. You will wait for over an hour if you accept a delivery from here. Just save yourself the time and trouble and don't do it.



Useful 1


Funny


Cool









Myke S.

Inglewood, CA

 799 friends

 10 reviews

 3 photos









9/15/2019


Single-handedly the dumbest restaurant experience I've ever had.

1. How do you not have a sign? Especially when parking is an issue & you can't even tell if you're at the right place.
2. They only accept Postmates orders but it doesn't say that online. They have menus plastered literally all over this profile that basically indicates this is a walk-in facility. But when you get here, it's a completely different story. They can't even take an order in the facility.

Way to lose money & a non-returning customer for not having the proper systems in place for real world scenarios. This shit was so dumb & a serious waste of my time.

 Useful 2

 Funny 2

 Cool 1

C

Chris

★ 1 review

Jun 13, 2019

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Food was not properly cooked

H

Heather

👤 Top reviewer

May 27, 2019

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Food might be fine I wouldn't know.... I was delivered garbage, hours and hours and hours latethat was cold mushed squished garbage..... it went straight in the trash....

Kristi B.
Burbank, CA
0 friends
1 review






 2/23/2020

If I could give you zero stars right now I would...I ordered for delivery on door dash. My order was accepted and when my delivery driver got there an hour later (when the order was to be picked up) he was told the order could not be fulfilled and was at that moment canceled. So, I wait an hour to then be told I'm not getting my order and have to order something else...never again.

 Useful
  Funny
  Cool

Daniel N.
 Los Angeles, CA
 8 friends
 25 reviews
 27 photos

👍👍👍👍 4/27/2020

This business does NOT care at all about the drivers or customers during this pandemic. The lines are ridiculous, the staff is unreasonable and unfriendly, and they ask people to crowd around each other after they wait have already waited in an excruciating long line just to "check in!" Apparently, they don't seem to care about the State and City's orders for businesses that are considered essential to practice social distancing. I've never seen an operation that is so disorganized!

Useful 1 Funny Cool



Mary F.

Canoga Park, Los Angeles, CA


0 friends

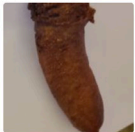
2 reviews

★☆☆☆☆ 4/5/2020


The customer service is soooo bad I'm driver for Postmates I'm waiting for 40 minutes .i never come back

 Useful 1  Funny  Cool

 **Ristra F.**
Los Angeles, United States
👤 122 friends
📝 68 reviews
📷 14 photos
📅 5/8/2020
📷 2 photos
Do not order anything from



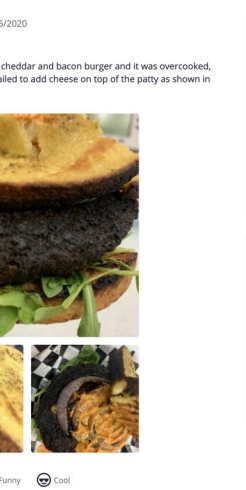
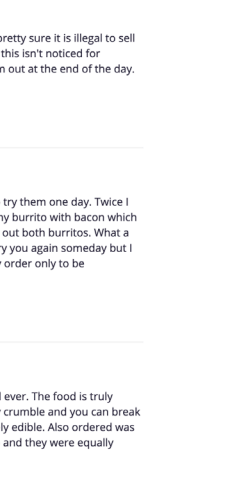
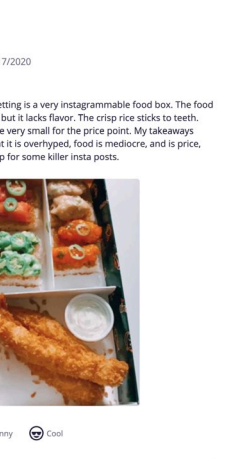
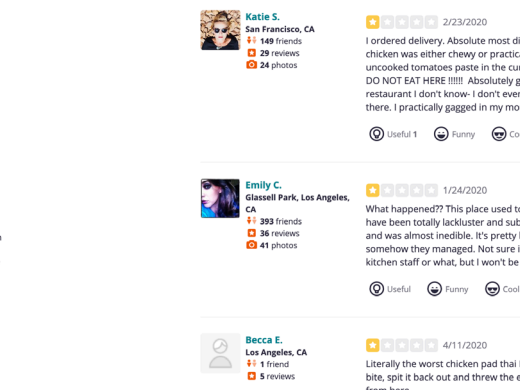
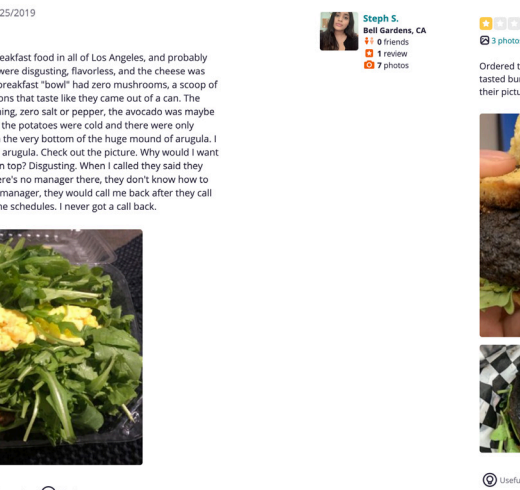
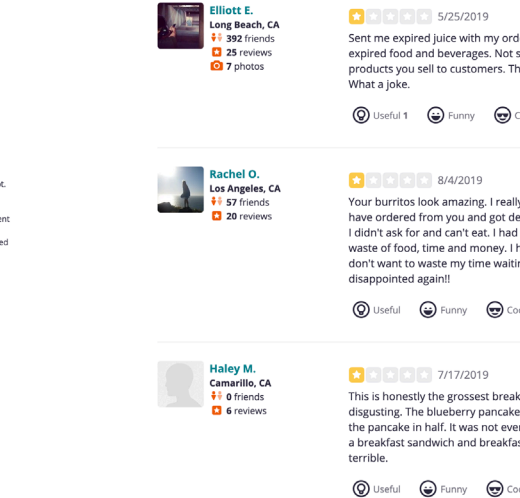
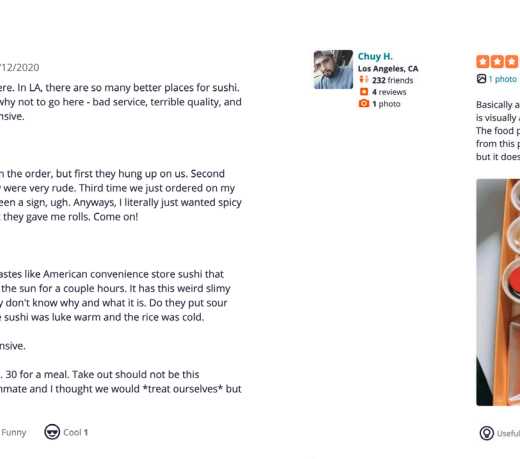
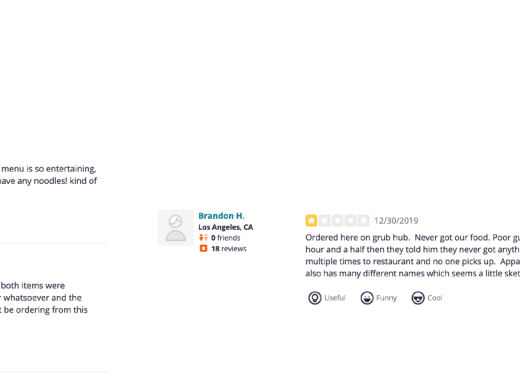
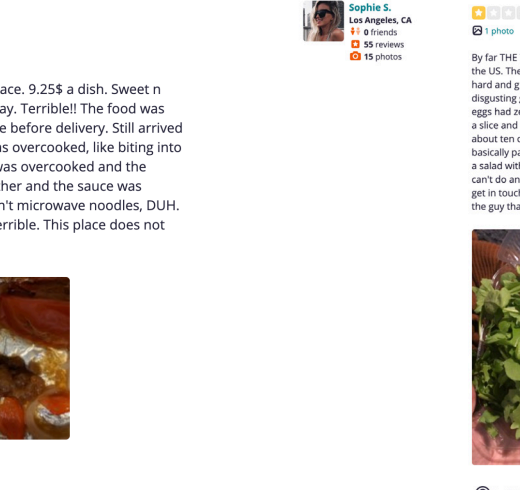
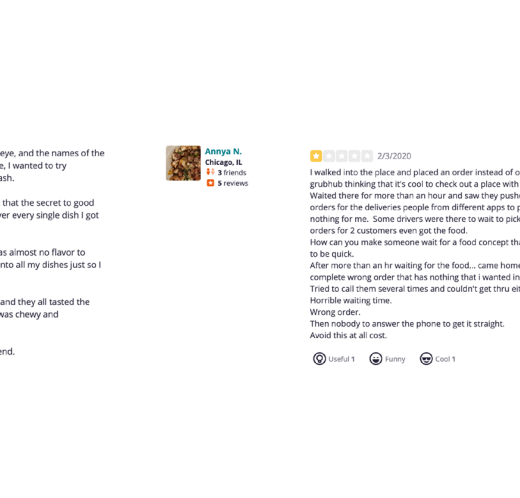
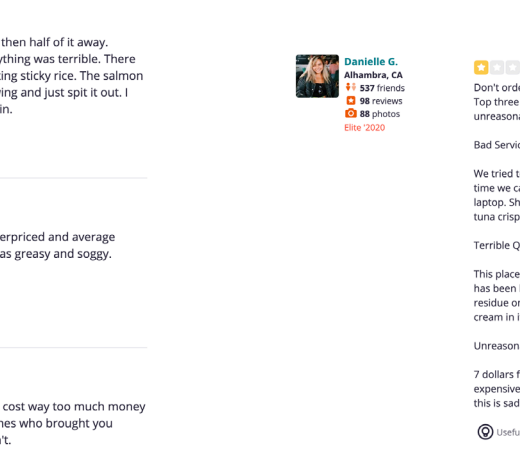
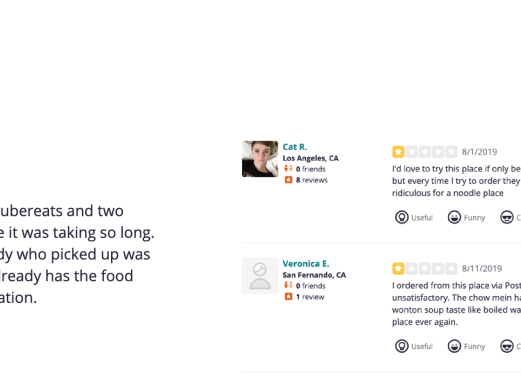
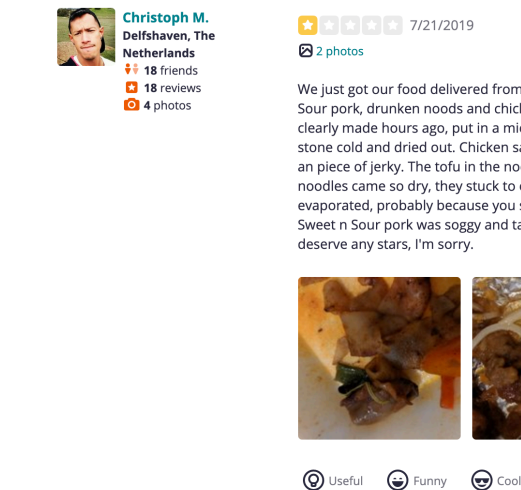
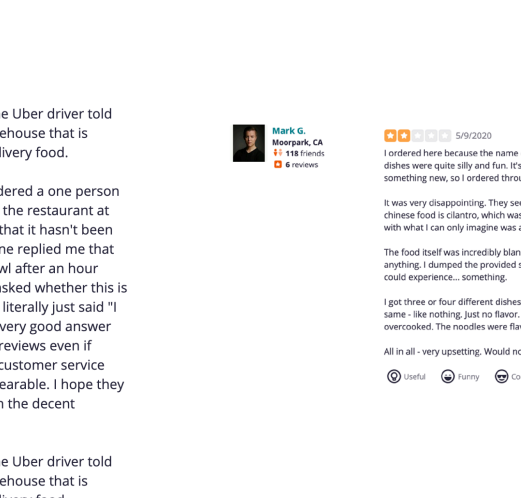
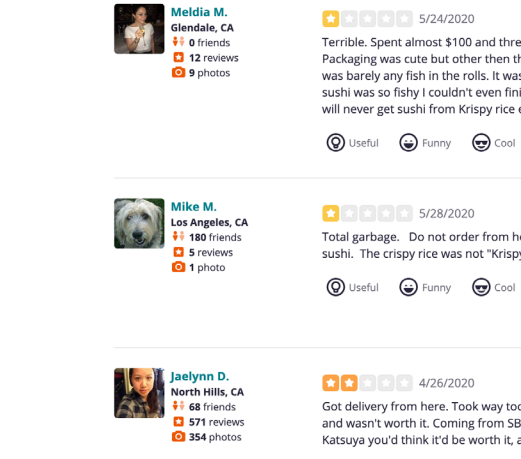
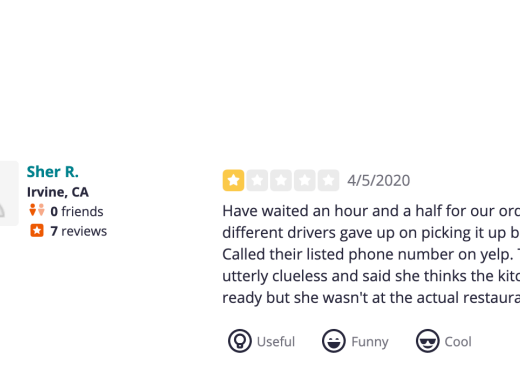
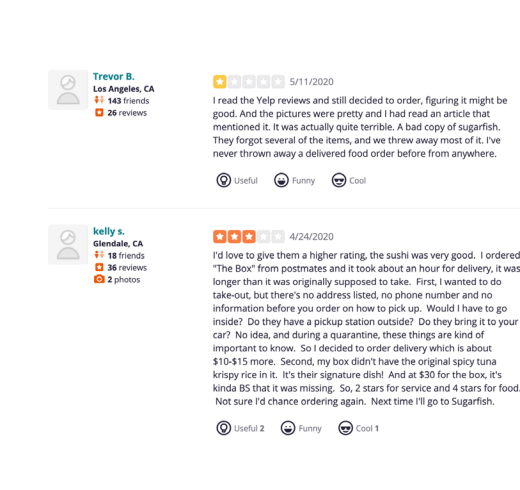
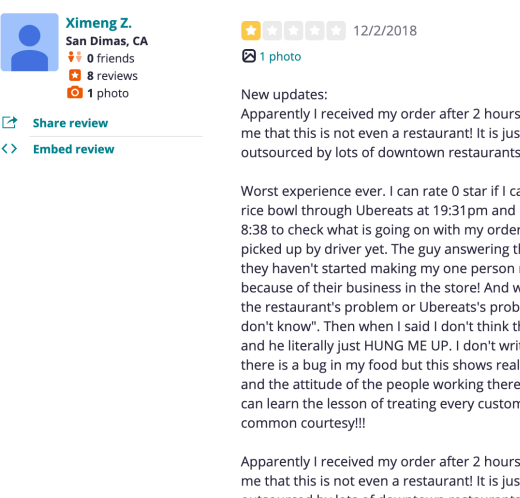
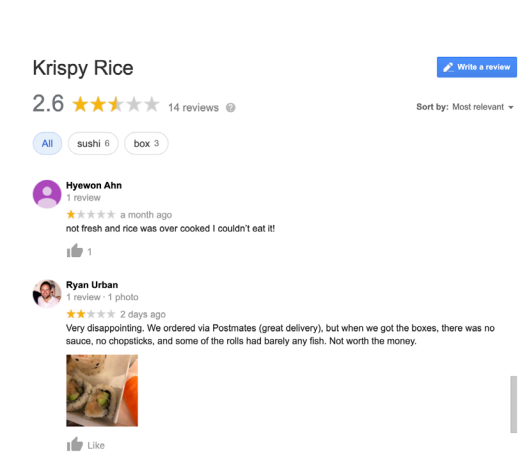
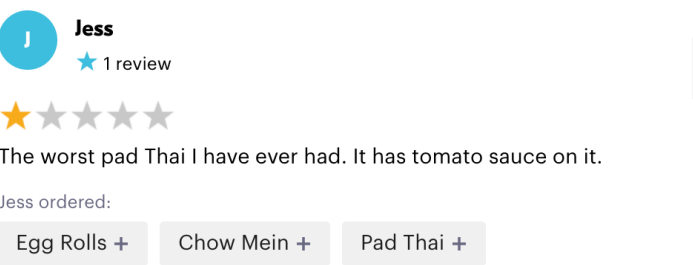
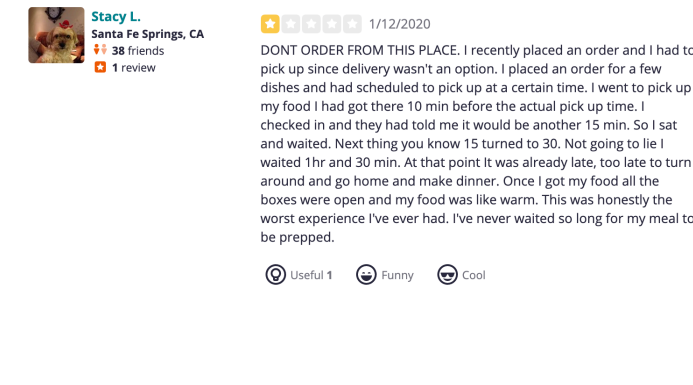
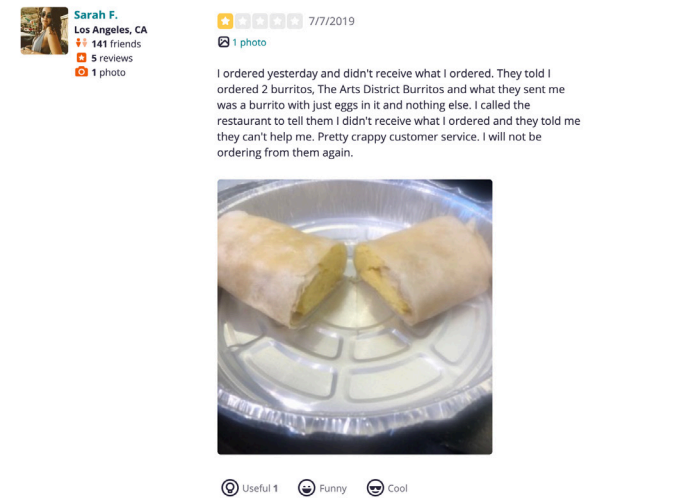
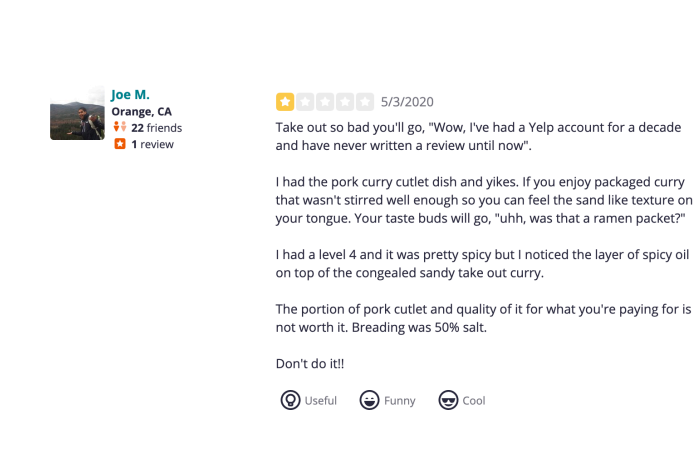
 Useful 1  Funny 1  Cool

 **Emma W.**
Woodland Hills, Woodland Hills, CA
1: 387 friends
2 reviews
1 photo

I ordered a delivery from UberEats and got two burritos from them. I am a vegetarian so I ordered the Beyond Burrito. The eggs were NOT cooked at all! It looked like they cracked the egg directly from the shell and rolled up the burrito. Would not recommend.

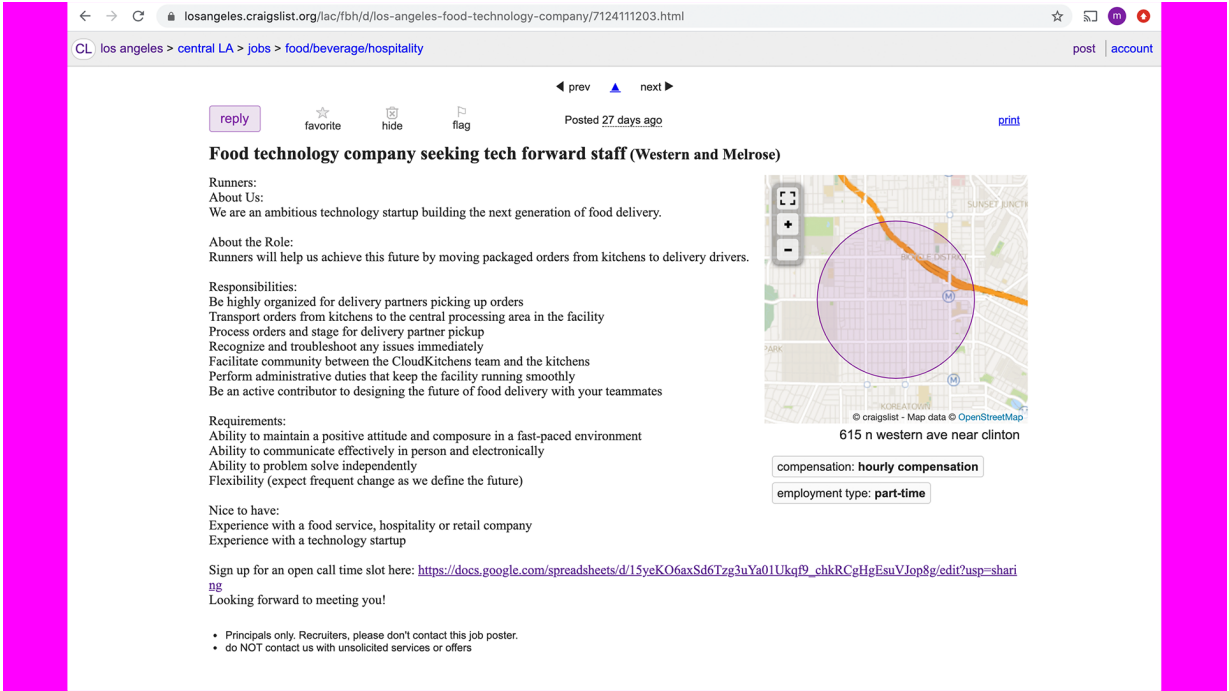


Useful Funny Cool



DELIVERY OR DIE

Welcome, then, to 2020, when an undercooked cauliflower pizza can be delivered more than an hour late and still set you back \$20.00. When a vegetarian salad arrives with a free floating shave of chicken thigh or an open bottle of Gatorade in the bag and there’s no one to call or to whom you can lodge a complaint. Welcome to a glimpse of a near future in which data dictates our preferences and we are all freelance gig workers engaged in what author David Peetz cites as “not there” employment, pretending to enjoy “not there” dining because it’s all we have left.

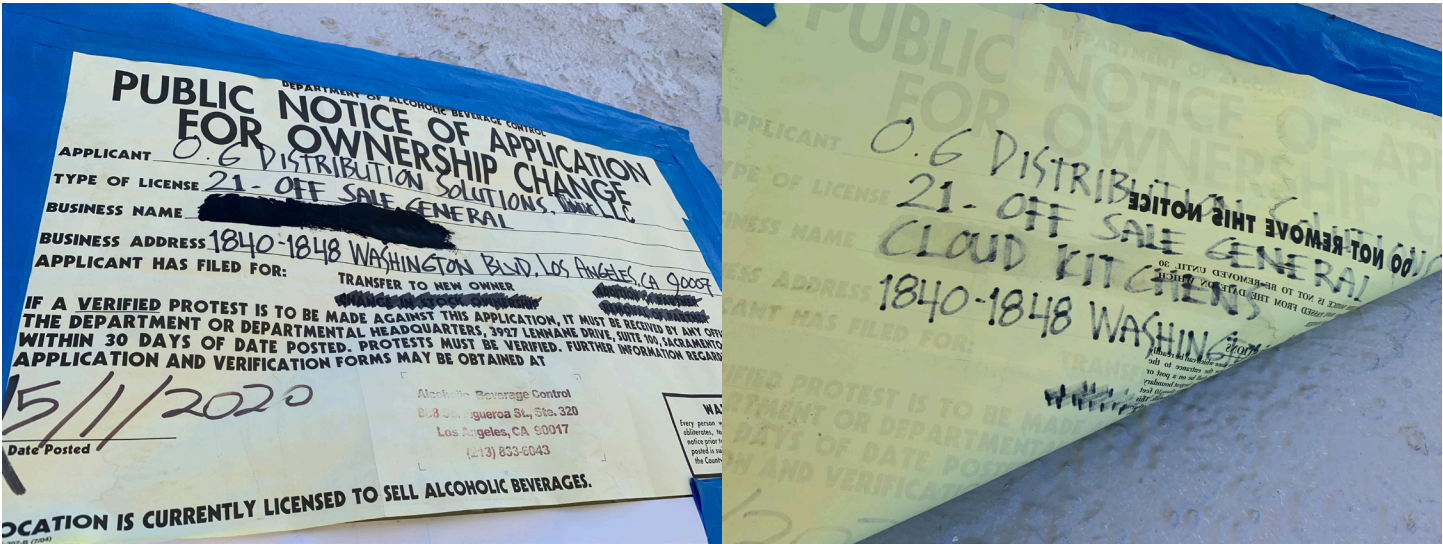


<Craigslist ad for “runner” at CloudKitchens’ 615 N Western Ave. location>

During the first few weeks of confinement that began in March of 2020 in L.A., our attention was diverted to all things pandemic. The focus of those who had—fortuitously, it must seem to them now—invested in the cloud kitchen marketplace was probably not on PPEs but on an emerging opportunity. One thing is clear: CloudKitchens will get rich-er off the back of this global pandemic. What might have taken 5 years to socially engineer into mainstream acceptance forcefully materialized overnight in March: contactless, delivery-only dining became the new default.

Since third-party food ordering platforms exist in mutual symbiosis with cloud kitchens, they too stand to benefit from the longterm integration of virtual restaurant brands into our social framework. Since 2017, UberEats has initiated about 4,000 virtual restaurants, many of which are exclusive to the app). As HNGRY’s Matt Newberg speculates, Kalanick’s venture is more likely concerned with longterm monopolization of the delivery-only market. One can imagine a

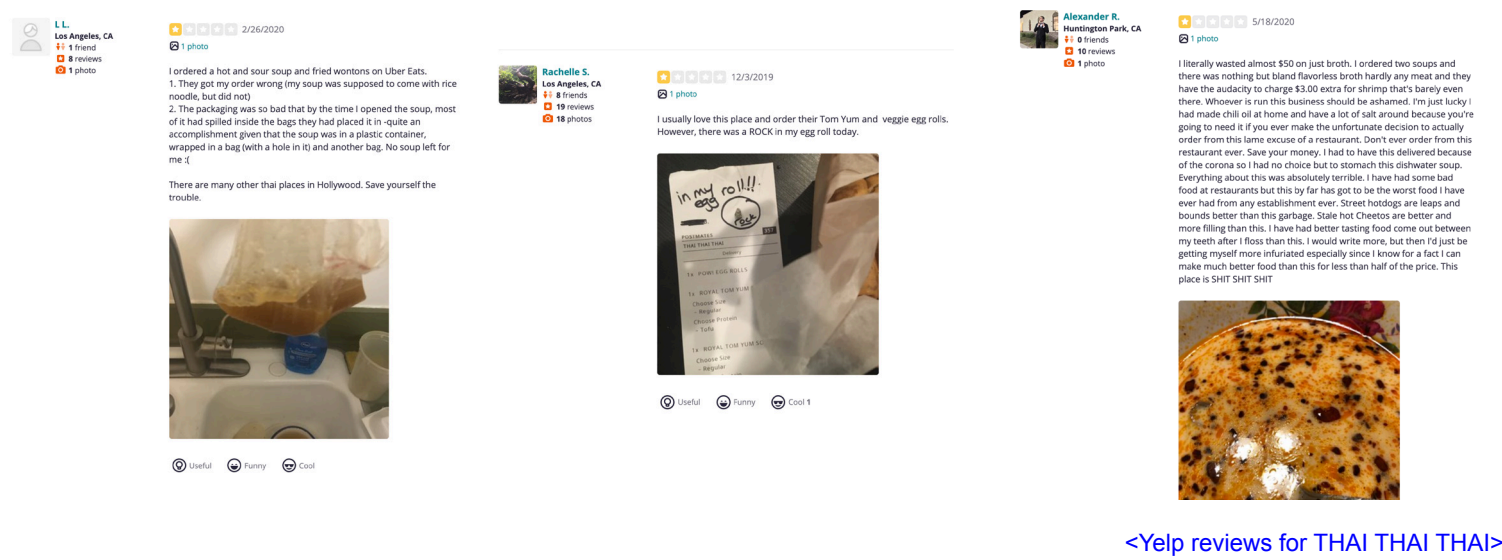
scenario in which CloudKitchens forms its own in-house courier service as well as its own complete suite of ghost kitchen cook staff, severing ties with third-party clients all together—the ultimate techno-libertarian utopia.



<Signage for CloudKitchens’ liquor license application outside of 1842 W Washington Blvd. O.G. Distributions appears to be a subsidiary company of CSS. Note: applicant name “CloudKitchens” has been blacked out, with original name visible on the reverse.>

Integral to a CloudKitchens vision of the future is Otter, the company’s proprietary point-of-sale management software. Billed as “the command center for your delivery business,” Otter’s supplemental function as a mass data aggregator for CloudKitchens should alarm even the most genial Silicon Valley sympathizer. Scouring the fine print of its T&Cs, one notices that Otter exerts the right to “access, retrieve and use information” pertaining to a kitchen’s third-party vendors. It is accepted, then, though perhaps not wholly understood, that using Otter simultaneously provides CloudKitchens an uninterrupted view into consumer behavior en masse. As soon as a company, CloudKitchens, for example, can accurately predict patterns of consumption contingent on location, income and time of day, they are better equipped to provide faster and cheaper deliveries. But data capitalism, as well we know, serves not only to predict our social-consumptive behavior, but to shape it (for corporate profit). It isn’t much of a stretch to envision a future where ghost kitchens, stealthily embedded across the nation, prepare and dispatch the requisite number of meals to certain neighborhood sites before customer orders have even been placed. “Nobody has replicated what worked in other ecommerce with food,” Mohamad Ballout of Dubai-based cloud kitchen group Kitopi told the Financial Times in February. “People are still operating last-mile logistics out of a front-of-house store. We are trying to replicate the third-party fulfillment hub that is used in other ecommerce verticals, in food.” Obfuscated by an incredible tumble of tech jargon is Ballout’s desire to relegate the once social

component of dining to a soulless, streamlined, and above all profitable transaction. But what if we don’t want our dining experience to mimic that of Amazon Subscribe & Save? What about slow, languorous meals in spaces with people not entirely like us? What about being tempted by the chef’s special? Or what if we just want to trust that the restaurant we’re ordering from is actually the/a restaurant? What if we’d like to be able to talk to a human, check up on an ingredient? Hold the soy sauce.



THE TRANSACTIONAL SUPPER

When the ground starts moving, all bets are off. Someone said this and meant it literally, referring to L.A. and earthquakes, but it works just as well as metaphor when considering the presence of cloud kitchens in L.A.’s food scene. Clearly the dynamics of the food service industry are changing, or being changed, by broad strokes initiatives led by men with big money. CloudKitchens specifically appears to be out to disrupt traditional relations to middle-tier, owner-operated eateries, and in so doing, redefine the hospitality landscape. To the extent that we’re able, it is incumbent that we examine the particularities of the tremors only now being felt in cities all across the U.S. and Europe as CloudKitchens pursues its rapid global expansion.

This isn’t a rile against futurist markets or innovative development. We aren’t nostalgic for some “other” time; we ourselves admit a kind of admiration for scalable intervention, for disruptive measures that enhance reflexivity and support civic growth. Besides, cloud kitchens are here to stay. In an increasingly chaotic, unstable and potentially uninhabitable world, it’s possible that our species’ survival will rely on the kinds of social-distancing measures that make delivery-only food service crucial. But we have always to ask who gains and who loses as the ground shifts beneath us? Whose interests are promoted and whose are neglected? To what degree of difference?

Cloud kitchens are symptomatic of changing consumer preferences, the dynamics of which approach practical, narrative, cultural, historical, economic and identity-based dimensions. As our relationships with food become ever more transactional, other values fall by the wayside. Should we not be concerned, though, about the loss of centuries of cultural heritage, passed down through recipes and hand-to-mouth knowledge economies? There is an implicit offense in embracing a ubiquitous virtual brand like THAI THAI THAI, in that it asserts there is one universal menu standard for Thai food in general. As a restaurant brand whose production is literally outsourced to a handful of independent Thai restaurants, THAI THAI THAI denies the actual array of diversity and subtle regional variations inherent to cultural cuisine. It also forgoes the consumers’ choice as to which establishment is handling their food prep.

Can we imagine instead a different kind of functioning, delivery food service platform, one that protects our best shared interests? That operates with transparency and accountability? That prioritizes workers’ protections and consumers’ rights within a framework of ethical governance and regulation? As it stands, there is such little regulatory oversight for the cloud kitchen marketplace that inevitable poor management leads to breakdown leads to revolt. Or a guy breaking into your HQ in the night, smashing a security cam and sending the whole thing up in flames.

<Suspected arson attempt at CloudKitchens SF location June 08, 2020>



Prepared by Bakersfield in June 2020.

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Special thanks to Matt Newberg of HNGRY for his early and extensive reporting on L.A.'s contemporary food scene.

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