

Lab-Grown Meat Coming to Supermarket Shelves Soon?

By **Jade Scipioni** | Published May 01, 2017 | **Food and Beverage** | **FOXBusiness**

This startup makes lab-grown meat from animal cells

A Silicon-Valley startup, Memphis Meats says they have successfully made the world's first lab-grown chicken strips as well as duck and beef using animal cells.

chicken, duck and beef—will be on a supermarket shelf near you within the next five years.

“[We’re] trying to put products on the shelves by 2021/2022,” Uma Valeti, Memphis Meats co-founder and CEO, tells FOX Business.

If this Silicon Valley food-tech startup has its way, its lab-grown meat—which includes

In March, the company announced that it created the “world’s first chicken strip from animal cells,” following their animal-free meatball debut in 2016. Lab-grown beef was previously developed in 2012 by a group of Dutch scientists.



“Essentially, we are taking a number of animal cells, giving them clean and nutritious food and then we watch them grow into a muscle. We harvest that muscle and then cook it,” Valeti says.

The whole process from start to finish takes about four to six weeks, depending on the texture. Valeti says the company’s current main goal is to raise capital and lower their production costs, in order to quickly bring the product to market.

“We’re not allowed to disclose our investors, but we are raising a round now and we are looking to continue to lower the costs – another 10 to 20 fold in the next 18 months – so we can start bringing this closer to reality,” he says.

Production costs currently run about \$6,000 per pound of meat, which is drastically down from a year ago, when it was \$18,000 per pound. However, Valeti says a lot of work still needs to be done to meet traditional store-bought meat production costs at about \$4 or less.

Memphis Meats is one of many startups aiming to disrupt the \$200 billion meat and poultry

industry. Companies like Impossible Foods and Beyond Meat already have meat substitutes (made from plants, not animal cell tissue) on store shelves.



“What we have done is figure out a way to take those same type of materials from plants and run them through a process of heating, cooling and pressure to create a piece of meat. So, you’re getting essentially the same things in terms of proteins, fats and water but it’s coming directly through a system that comes from plants versus going through the animal,” Ethan Brown, CEO and co-founder of Beyond Meat, told FOX Business in October.

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Beyond Meat has also caught the eye of big investors like billionaire Bill Gates and the world’s biggest meat producer, Tyson Foods (**TSN**), which announced earlier this year that they took a 5% stake in the company. Tyson’s CEO Tom Hayes told FOX Business in March that he sees plant-based protein as a big part of the food industry’s future.

“If you take a look at the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) stats, protein consumption is

growing around the world — and it continues to grow. It's not just hot in the U.S.; it's hot everywhere. People want protein, so whether it's animal-based protein or plant-based protein, they have an appetite for it. Plant-based protein is growing almost, at this point, a little faster than animal-based, so I think the migration may continue in that direction," Hayes told FOX Business.

Additionally, the company launched a venture capital fund worth \$150 million to invest in startups focusing on meat alternatives.

But when it comes to the more controversial lab-grown meat, some meat industry insiders argue it will never compete with "the real thing."

"More than 95% of Americans love meat and taste is one of the top drivers. While we haven't tasted lab-grown products that claim to substitute for meat, we do know these products have some tough competition when it comes to taste, texture and nutrition," a spokesman for the North American Meat Institute tells FOX Business.

When asked what he would tell critics with ethical objections to eating something made in a lab, Valeti says he wants consumers to keep an open mind.

"It is the most ethical way of producing meat by far, and I would invite anyone to come and tell me why it's unethical. But more importantly, for critics – or anyone who has never really heard about this, I understand it's new – I think the magical moment happens when they come see it being cooked and they smell it and taste it. Then they say, 'we get it,'" he says.