McDonald’s Is Phasing Out a Beloved Restaurant Feature

The self-serve soft drink machines at McDonald’s are about to be a relic of the past.

The fast-food giant announced that by the end of 2032, it plans to phase out all self-serve drink stations from its stores in the U.S. as the chain looks to revamp its serving model and customer experience.

Restaurants will migrate to a “crew pour system,” where workers will use automated systems to refill customer drinks and bring them to them, instead of customers going up to the machines and refilling themselves.

“The crew pour system – which actually will use automated beverage systems to mechanically fill drink orders – minimizes human contact,” said the Illinois-based *State Journal-Register*, who first reported the news. “Crew pour also eliminates theft and emphasizes the brand’s new focus on creating a more relaxed dine-in experience complete with servers delivering meals to the table.”

A self-serve drink machine at McDonald's restaurant in Lafayette, California (Getty Images)

McDonald's also confirmed the news to *Insider,* explaining that the decision was made in order to help streamline the hospitality experience for customers regardless of how they choose to consume from the chain.

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"This change is intended to create a consistent experience for both customers and crew across all ordering points, whether that's McDelivery, the app, kiosk, drive-thru or in-restaurant," the company said in a statement.

The move isn't completely unexpected, as the company has been

making a push towards new digital technology in its stores.

In December 2022, McDonald's began operating a new concept restaurant in Fort Worth, Texas, that offers order-yourself kiosks with a smaller dining area inside and more parking spaces for drive-thru, curbside, and delivery drivers.

"The technology in this restaurant not only allows us to serve our customers in new, innovative ways, it gives our restaurant team the ability to concentrate more on order speed and accuracy, which makes the experience more enjoyable for everyone," Keith Vanecek, the Texas-based franchisee who is operating the test restaurant said at the time.

McDonald's did not immediately respond to *Entrepreneur's* request for comment.

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The chain is coming off a strong Q2 2023, with global comparable sales increasing by a solid 11.7% quarter over quarter.

McDonald's was up just under 7.8% in a one-year period as of Tuesday afternoon.

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